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DUMARESQ'S DAUGHTER

A Novel

BY

GRANT ALLEN

AUTHOR OF

'IN ALL SHADES,' 'THIS MORTAL COIL,' 'THE TENTS OF SHEM,' ETC.

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DUMARESQ'S DAUGHTER

CHAPTER I.

BY THE GATE OF THE SEA.

When any man tells you he doesn't know Petherton Episcopi, you may immediately conceive a low opinion of his character and intellect. For all the world, in fact, has been to Petherton. Not, of course, in the same broad sense that all the world has been to Margate and Great Yarmouth; nor yet in the same narrow and restricted sense that all the world has been to Brighton and Scarborough. The vulgar mob that frequents the first, the fashionable mob that frequents the second, would find in Petherton nothing to satisfy their essentially similar and gregarious tastes. Birds of a feather flock together in the crowded promenades of the Spa and the Pierhead. But the quiet, cultivated, nature-loving few, the saving minority who form the salt of the earth (according to Matthew Arnold) in these latter hurrying scurrying centuries, all of them seem by some native instinct or elective affinity to have picked out the very name of Petherton from the list of competing English watering-places at the end of Bradshaw.

You have been there yourself, I feel sure beforehand, so I needn't describe it to you. It is of a type, indeed, with Lyme Regis, and Sherringham, and St. Ives, and Overstrand; with Newquay, and Aldeburgh, and Mundesley, and Budleigh Salterton; one of the many

unspoilt nooks and corners in a broken gap of rockbound coast, shunned by the vast class of noisy tourists to whom the seaside means only a pier and an esplanade, and a military band and a crowd of loungers—but dearly prized by simple old-fashioned souls, like you and me, to whom the seaside is synonymous rather with open cliffs and heather-clad heights and creeping surf and a broad beach, broken only by the fishermen's boats and the bare brown legs of the shrimpers in the foreground. Hence, when any man tells you he doesn't know Petherton, you may set him down at once with tolerable accuracy in your own mind as a son of the Philistines—a member of the Yarmouth and Scarborough contingent—and take his mental and moral gauge accordingly.

Charles Austen Linnell—he was careful to put the accent, himself, on the last syllable—found Petherton suit him to the very top of his liking. It lies surrounded, as you know, by high sloping hills, with a sea-front undesecrated as yet by the financial freaks of the speculative builder, and a tiny stone pier of Plantagenet antiquity, enclosing in its curve one of the quaintest and oldest coasting ports in all England. There are endless 'bits' to sketch in the neighbourhood; and Linnell, who loved to describe himself as 'a painter by trade,' found subjects ready to his hand at every turn of the picturesque old borough. He stood in front of his easel on the west cliff, that summer morning, gazing with ingenuous admiration and delight, first at the cottage with the creeper-covered porch, and then at his own clever counterfeit presentiment of the same on the sheet of thick white Whatman's paper stretched out before him. And well he might; for it was a cottage of the almost obsolete poetic type, the thatched and gabled cottage with low overhanging eaves now being rapidly crowded out of existence in the struggle for life by the bare and square brick and slated workman's dwelling-house. Happy the farm-labourer, if only he knew his own good-fortune, the painter murmured half unconsciously to himself (after the second Georgic), whose luck it was to dwell within those pretty, rose-clad, insanitary windows.

As he held his handsome head appreciatively on one

side, and surveyed his own work with the complacent smile of the satisfied artist, an unexpected voice from behind startled him suddenly.

'What, Linnell!' the voice cried. 'You here, my dear fellow! I'd no idea of this. How lucky I met you!'

Linnell turned, blushing crimson like a girl. To say the truth, he hated to be caught in the obvious act of admiring his own poor tentative water-colours. 'Ha, ha, the prowling art-critic!' he answered, with a guilty air. 'Our avenging angel! We can never escape him. He dogs the trade like its own evil conscience. I didn't know, Mansel, you were looking over my shoulder and appraising my poor ineffective efforts.'

'Well, that's a nice way to welcome an old friend, after I don't know how many years that we haven't seen one another!' Mansel responded good-humouredly, grasping his hand hard with a friendly pressure. I steal upon you unawares from the middle distance, making sure it's you, in the full expectation of a warm reception; and I get called in return an avenging angel, and likened unwarrantably, out of pure wantonness, to the most hateful and baneful of created things, the crawling art-critic. For I, too, you know, have felt the creature bite my heel. I, too, have crushed the loathly worm. I, too, have suspended myself from a hook in Suffolk Street.'

Linnell wrung his old friend's hands warmly.

'You took me so by surprise,' he replied in an apologetic tone. 'I'm afraid you must have thought me an awful fool, surveying my own handiwork with a complacent smirk, as if I were a Cox, or a Crome or a Turner. But the fact is, my dear boy, every fellow on earth who paints at all must throw his whole heart into it; he must cultivate egotism, and believe in himself, or he'll never get other people to believe in him. Not that *I* believe in myself, for one moment, at bottom: I know I'm not worth a crooked sixpence, viewed as a painter. But don't think I didn't know you for a fellow-journeyman. I've seen your name at the Institute often, and admired your work too, if you'll allow me to say so. It's queer, indeed, we've never knocked up against one

another accidentally anywhere since we left Christ Church.'

'Well, not so queer,' the other replied, 'if you take into consideration the patent fact that you go and bury yourself for half the year in the wilds of Africa, and only come to England, for the other half, when all the rest of us are hard at work in Cornwall, or the Highlands or Norway, or Switzerland. Very few artists frequent the desert in mid-December, and you never show up in winter in London.'

Linnell blushed again, this time with a faint flush of visible pleasure.

'You knew, then, that I spent the best part of my time in Egypt or Algiers?' he murmured timidly.

'My dear fellow, how could I call myself alive, I should like to know, if I hadn't admired those Moorish maidens with the wistful dark eyes and the Mohammedan voluptuousness, or those dim streets where veiled beauties mysteriously descend interminable steps of the native quarter, which testify to your existence in the Grosvenor annually? Not to know them would argue myself unknown with a vengeance. Everybody worth naming has seen and praised your glossy Nubians and your dreamy Arab girls.'

'No; have they, though, really?' Linnell echoed back with eager delight. 'I didn't know anyone (except the critics, confound them!) ever took the trouble to notice my things. There's so much good work in the Grosvenor always, that one naturally expects the *lesser* men to be passed by unheeded.'

'Besides,' Mansel continued, without rising to the fly, 'I've heard of you now and again from our neighbours the Maitlands, who keep a villa or something of the sort over yonder at Algiers, and made your acquaintance there, you remember, last winter.'

Linnell's too expressive face fell slightly. If the secret must out, he preferred to be tracked by his handicraft alone.

'Why, yes,' he answered in a disappointed tone; 'of course I know the Maitlands well. It's through them, to tell you the truth, that I'm here this summer. The

old General knocked up against me in town last week, and asked me to run down and stop with them at High Ash. But I wouldn't accept the invitation outright, of course: I hate visiting—cramps individuality: I always like to be my own master. Besides, they've got a girl in the house, you see, and I bar girls, especially that one. She's a great deal too much in the clouds for me, and she makes me fidgety. I prefer women who keep their feet planted on the solid ground. I was born on the earth, and I like to stop there. However, the old man's account of the place pleased me, and I've come down to stop at the Red Lion, accordingly, and do some sketching—or at least what I take, myself, for sketching—among the cliffs and cottages. From what you say, then, I infer you abide here.'

'You infer like a treatise on deductive logic. We do abide here. We've got a bit of a *pied-à-terre* in a humble way on the hilltop yonder. A poor thing, but mine own. You must come and lunch with us this very morning.'

'Thanks. It's awfully good of you to think of bidding me. But you're married, I see. Inference again: you said *we*. Perhaps Mrs. Mansel won't be equally glad to see a perfect stranger at a moment's notice. Ladies object to the uninvited guest, not unreasonably. I'm not an old Oxford friend of *hers*, too, you know, my dear fellow.'

Mansel laughed.

'Oh, Ida won't mind, I'm sure,' he answered hastily, though with the internal qualms of the well-trained husband. 'She's quite accustomed to my Bohemian habits. I insist upon going out into the highways and byways, and bringing home whoever I light upon. That's a pretty sketch of yours. As smooth as usual. Your quality's so good! and so much depth and breadth the shadows of the doorway!'

Linnell put his head on one side once more, with a dubious air.

'Do you really think so?' he said, evidently reassured. 'Well, that's a comfort. I'm so glad you like it. I was afraid, myself, the grays and yellows in the thatch were

all wrong. They've bothered me terribly. Would you put a touch or so more of olive-green for local colour in the dark corner by the deep-red creeper there? I'm not quite sure I've brought out the complementary shades under the eaves distinct enough.'

'Not another stroke!' Mansel answered decisively, eyeing it hard with his arms crossed. 'Not a dash, not a tinge! not a jot! not a thought even! You'd spoil the whole picture if you altered a single bit of the colouring there, I assure you. That's the fault of your detail, I've always said, if you won't be offended at an old friend's criticism. You spoil your best work by over-elaboration. I can see at a glance in all your most careful pieces—oh yes, I've studied them in Bond Street, you may be sure'—for Linnell had waved his hand deprecatingly—'that you do a good thing, and you do it to a turn, and then you are afraid to leave well alone, so you touch it up, and you touch it up, and you touch it up again, till all the breadth and force is taken clean out of it, and only the detail and the after-thoughts are left on your canvas.'

Linnell shook his head with a despondent air.

'It's too true,' he said slowly. 'I know it only too well myself already.'

'Well, then,' his friend answered with the prompt brusqueness of sound common-sense, 'be warned by experience, and avoid it in future. Don't go and do what you know's an error. Have the courage of your convictions, and leave off in time. The minute I looked at this bit on the easel, I said to myself: "By George! I didn't know Linnell had it in him." The ease and verve of the thing was just what I liked about it. And then at the very moment when I'm standing admiring it, you propose to go and spoil the entire effect by faking it up to get the local colour strictly according to Cocker. Local colour and all the rules be hanged! The picture's the thing; and the picture's a vast deal better without them. Besides, I want you to get this particular sketch good. You know, of course, whose cottage you're painting?'

'No; I don't,' Linnell answered, surveying it care-

lessly. 'John Noakes's, or Simon Stokes's, I should say, most probably.'

'Wrong!' Mansel cried, lowering his voice a trifle to a mysterious undertone, for dim figures were flitting half unseen behind the high box-hedge opposite. 'That poetical-looking cottage'—his tone sinking to a whisper—'you'll hardly believe it, but it's Haviland Dumaresq's.'

At that famous name, Linnell drew himself up in sudden surprise. If Mansel had counted upon producing an impression, he hadn't gone far wrong in his calculation. Linnell whistled a long low whistle.

'No; you're trying to take me in,' he exclaimed at last after a short pause. 'We always called you "The Wag" at Christ Church, I remember. You can't surely mean Haviland Dumaresq the philosopher?'

Mansel smiled a smile of conscious superiority.

'You remind me of what Lewis Carroll said one evening at High Table,' he answered quickly, 'when we were all discussing the authorship of the Homeric poems. Everybody else had given his pet opinion on that endless problem, and while they all gabbled about it, Carroll sat and looked on grimly. At last somebody appealed to him for confirmation of his own special dogma. "Well," said Carroll, looking up in his dry way, "I've got a theory of my own about the 'Iliad' and 'Odyssey.' It is, that they weren't really written by Homer, but by another person of the same name." In Haviland Dumaresq's case, however, there's no room for any such doubt. No two people in the world could possibly be called by accident by such a singular combination of names as that. Don't shake your head. I'm quite in earnest. This is the original and only genuine Dumaresquian Theory. When you ask for the real Encyclopædic Philosophy, see that you get it. And here's the shop all the true stuff comes from.'

Linnell glanced up at his old college friend in breathless astonishment. For a moment it was clear he could hardly believe his own ears.

'Are you really serious?' he asked at last, gasping. 'I've always believed in Dumaresq most profoundly; and *I* can't suppose he inhabits a hovel. The "Encyclopædic

Philosophy" has almost put a girdle round the world in my own portmanteau. I never went anywhere that I didn't take it. And do you mean to tell me the man who wrote it—the philosopher who transcends space and time—the profoundest thinker of our age and nation—the greatest mathematician and deepest metaphysician in all Europe—really lives in a labourer's cottage?'

'Why not?' Mansel answered with a screwed-up face. 'It's a very picturesque one.'

'Picturesque! *Je vous l'accorde.* But convenient, commodious, suitable, no. And painters as we are, we must still admit a man can't live on pure picturesqueness. Dirt and discomfort, I've always maintained, are necessary elements of the picturesque. But dirt and discomfort are personally distasteful in their actual form. It is only when painted that they become agreeable. What on earth can make a man like Haviland Dumaresq bury himself here, in such a mere cramped outhouse?'

'Poverty,' the local artist replied laconically.

'Poverty!' his friend echoed, all incredulous, a frank indignation flashing from his eye. 'You don't mean to tell me the man who first formulated that marvellous Law of Sidereal Reciprocity is still so poor that he has to inhabit a ploughman's hut in a remote village? For the honour of our kind, I refuse to believe it. I won't believe it; I can't believe it. It's a disgrace to the age. I knew Dumaresq was comparatively little read or known, of course—that's the natural penalty of extreme greatness—but I always pictured the philosopher to myself as a wealthy man, living in easy circumstances in a London square, writing his books in a luxurious library, and serenely waiting for future generations to discover the true proportions of his stature. Bacon left his fame by will, you remember, to the care of foreign nations and the after-age. Foreign nations have found out Dumaresq already: the after-age will find him out in time, as surely as it found out Descartes and Newton.'

'You speak enthusiastically,' Mansel answered with a careless wave of his hand towards the rose-bound casements of the poetical cottage. 'I'm glad of that, for I'm always pleased when anybody comes here who has so

much as heard poor old Dumaresq's name. The old man has led a life of continued neglect: that's the long and the short of it. All his hopes have been blighted and disappointed. His great work, though it's had here and there in all parts of the world a few glowing and fervid disciples like yourself, has fallen flat, for the most part, so far as public appreciation's concerned; and everything he expected to do he's failed in effecting. He seems to me always like a massive broken Egyptian pillar, rising among the ruins of Karnak or Luxor, as I see them rise in some of your own pictures.' Linnell's eye flashed with pleasure. 'And it's a great point for him to meet nowadays with anybody who sympathizes at all with his aims and his methods. He's had so little recognition in life, in fact, that, old as he is, a word of encouragement, a single compliment, an allusion to his work in ordinary conversation, seems to thrill him through and through with surprised enjoyment. I've seen him as pleased as a child at praise. He acknowledges it with a singular stately courtesy, as a right deferred, and holds his head higher in visible pride for the rest of that evening.'

'How pathetic!' Linnell cried. 'Yet I can easily believe it. What I can't believe is that Haviland Dumaresq should still be living in absolute poverty. I hope when you say that, you don't mean me to take your words in the literal acceptation that he wants for money?'

'But I do, though, my dear fellow. I do—every word of it. The man's as poor as the proverbial church mouse. He never made a farthing out of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy": it was dead loss from beginning to end: and he lives to this day from hand to mouth by doing the merest scientific hackwork for London publishers —Universal Instructors, you know, and that sort of claptrap.'

With a sudden start, Linnell folded up his easel very resolutely.

'Come away,' he said in a firm voice. 'I can't stand this sort of thing, for my part, any longer. Haviland Dumaresq in want of money! Haviland Dumaresq lack-

ing the bare means of support! Haviland Dumaresq buried in a pigsty! The thing's disgraceful. It's not to be endured! Why doesn't some rich person somewhere take the matter up and establish and endow him?'

'Some wealthy countryman of yours across the Atlantic for example?' Mansel echoed good-humouredly. 'Well, yes, Americans are always fond of that earthly-providence business. I wonder, indeed, they've never thought of it.'

Linnell's face clouded visibly to the naked eye.

'What!' he cried, with unmistakable annoyance in his testy tone. 'That old mistake alive and green still! How often shall I have to correct the blunder? Didn't I tell you at Christ Church, over and over again, that I wasn't an American, and never had been—that I'd never a drop of Yankee blood in my veins—that my connection with Boston was a purely accidental one? My father merely settled there for—ur—for business purposes. We are not, and we never were, American citizens. I hate to be called what I'm not, and never will be. But that's neither here nor there at present. The question for the moment is simply this; Why doesn't somebody establish and endow Haviland Dumaresq?'

Mansel's face brimmed over with suppressed amusement.

'Establish and endow him!' he cried with a short laugh. 'My dear fellow, I'd like to see the man, American or otherwise, brave enough to suggest it to him for half a second. He'd better have a fast-trotting horse and a convenient gig waiting round the corner before he tries; for Haviland Dumaresq would forthwith arise and slay him with his hands, as King Arthur proposed to do to the good Sir Bedivere, unless he evacuated the premises with all reasonable haste before the old man could get up and at him. He's the proudest soul that ever stepped this earth, is Haviland Dumaresq. He'd rather starve than owe aught to any man. I can fancy how he'd take the proposal to subsidize him. The bare mention of the thing would kill him with humiliation.'

By this time Linnell had finished folding up his easel and picture, and addressed himself vigorously on the road homeward.

'What are you going for?' Mansel asked with an innocent face.

'Going for?' Linnell repeated, with profound energy. 'Why, *something* must be done, I suppose, at once, about Dumaresq. This state of things is simply intolerable. A man with a world-wide reputation for the deepest thought among all who can think—that is to say, among all except absolute dolts and idiots—there, there, I haven't even patience to talk about it. *Something* must be done I tell you, this very day, to set things square for him.'

'Exactly,' Mansel went on, gazing up at the sky in a vacant, far-away fashion. 'You're rich, we all know, Linnell, like the mines of Golconda. You drop as a universal provider from the clouds——'

He broke off suddenly, for Linnell had halted, and looked back at him half angrily, with a sudden, quick suspicious glance.

'*I* rich!' the handsome young artist cried, with an impatient snap of his long middle finger. 'Again one of those silly old exploded Christ Church fallacies. Who ever told you I was rich, I'd like to know? You never had it from *my* lips, at any rate, Mansel. I wish unauthorized people wouldn't make one against one's will into a peg to hang startling myths and romances upon. A painter by trade, whose pictures only sell by accident, can never be rich—unless he has private means of his own, of course; works a gold mine or a Pennsylvanian oil-well. I own neither. Still, for all that, I feel it a burning shame to the times we live in that Haviland Dumaresq—the deepest thinker of our age and race—should end his days in a ploughman's cottage.'

CHAPTER II.

LINNELL'S MYSTERIES.

THEY turned aside into the deep-cut lane that led by tortuous twists toward the main road, and walked along for a second or two in solemn silence. Mansel was the first to break their reverie.

'Why, Linnell,' he cried, with a start of astonishment, pointing down to his friend's feet with an awkward gesture, 'you're all right again that way now, then, are you? You—you don't find your leg trouble you any longer?'

Till that moment, the new-comer to Petherton had been strolling along easily and naturally enough; but almost as the words passed Mansel's lips, the older resident noticed that Linnell was now limping a little with his left foot—an imperceptible limp to a casual observer, though far more marked within the last few seconds than it had been a minute or two before attention was called to it. Linnell glanced down and smiled uneasily.

'Oh, I hobble along rather better than I used to do,' he answered casually, with an evasive laugh. 'They sent me to Egypt for that, you know. Dry as blazes in Egypt. The old affection was rheumatic in origin, it seems. Damp intensified it. I was told a warm climate might do me good. Sir Anthony Wraxall—astute old beggar—advised me never to let myself feel cold in my limbs for a single moment; and I've done my best ever since to follow out his directions to the letter. I've spent every winter for the last five years on the Nile, or in Algeria. I've camped out for weeks together in the middle of the desert: I've dressed half my time like an Arab chief, to give my limbs free play: I've ridden all day long on my horse or my camel; I've never walked when I could possibly get a mount of any sort; and in the end, I'm beginning to hobble about, I'm glad to say, in a way that remotely resembles walking. I suppose the treatment's getting me round at last a bit.'

'Resembles walking,' Mansel exclaimed, with surprise. 'Why, my dear fellow, you can walk every bit as well as all the rest of us. To tell you the truth, you stood so firm, and turned about and walked off so naturally, that I'd almost forgotten, at the first blush, all about your old difficulty.'

'That was because I was excited and indignant about poor old Dumaresq,' Linnell answered hastily, with obvious embarrassment. 'I always walk better when

I'm emotionally roused. It takes my mind off. I forget I've legs. When I play lawn-tennis, I never think for the time being about my lameness. It's when my attention's called to the existence of my feet that I feel it worst. Self-consciousness, I suppose. But don't let's discuss me. The empirical ego's always tedious. There are so many other much more interesting subjects than an individual man to talk about in the universe!'

'I'm not so sure of that,' Mansel replied reflectively. Man, says Emerson, is perennially interesting to man; and I always like to hear about you, Linnell. I expect another winter or two 'll set you up completely. Why, my dear fellow, where are you going off to? You're coming to lunch with us, aren't you? That's our little box, you see—up there on the hill-top.'

'Oh, thank you,' Linnell answered, gazing round him abstractedly. 'But I don't think I'll come in to lunch to-day, if you please. I've too much respect for Mrs. Mansel's feelings. If you'll allow me, I'll drop in upon you this afternoon, and pay my respects first in due form—and respectable clothes—to your wife and family. In England, you know, all things must be done decently and in order.'

'But not in Bohemia, my dear fellow; not in Bohemia.'

Linnell glanced down nervously upon the deep blue bay.

'Your Bohemia and Shakespeare's are much the same, it seems,' he answered, smiling. 'Each is provided with a sea-coast, gratis, by poetical license. But I won't avail myself of your kindness, for all that. I'll go back to the inn first and change my suit. These shabby old painting-things aren't fit company for ladies' society. This afternoon, if you'll allow me to call, I shall hope to come up, arrayed like Solomon in all his glory, and leave my card respectfully upon Mrs. Mansel.'

A sudden thought seemed to strike the would-be host.

'You're a bachelor, of course?' he exclaimed interrogatively.

Linnell's eye wandered down once more, with a timid glance, towards his left foot.

'Do you suppose a painter whose works don't sell would be likely to burden any woman on earth with *that?*' he asked, somewhat bitterly—'least of all, a woman whom he loved and respected?'

'Come, come, Linnell!' the other man cried, with genuine kindliness. 'This is too ridiculous: quite overwrought, you know. You carry your sensitiveness a deal too far. A fine, manly, handsome fellow like you—an upstanding man, who can ride, and swim, and play lawn-tennis—to talk like that—why, it's simple nonsense. I should think any girl in her senses would be glad enough, if she could, to catch you.'

'That's the way you married men always talk,' Linnell answered shortly. 'As soon as you've secured a wife for yourselves, you seem to lose all the chivalry in your nature. You speak as if every woman were ready to jump at the very first man who happens to ask her. That may be the way, I dare say, with a great many of them. If so, they're not the sort I'd care to marry. There are women *and* women, I suppose, as there are fagots *and* fagots. I prefer, myself, the shrinking variety—the kind that accepts a man for his own sake, not for the sake of getting married merely.'

'You know what the Scotch girl said when her parents represented to her the various faults of the scapegrace who'd proposed to her?' Mansel put in, laughing. '"Oo, ay," she said; "but he's aye a man, ye ken." And you have there in a nutshell the whole philosophy of the entire matter. Still, setting aside all that, even, I know no man more likely——'

Linnell brushed him aside with his hand hastily.

'Well, here our roads part,' he said, with some decision in his tone, like one who wishes to check an unpleasant argument. 'I'll see you again this afternoon, when I've made my outer man fit for polite society. Till then, good-bye;' and with a swinging pace he walked off quickly down the steep hill, erect and tall, his easel and picture slung carelessly by his side, and no trace of lameness perceptible anywhere in his rapid stride and manly carriage.

Mansel gazed after him with a painter's admiration for

well-built figure. 'As good-looking a fellow as ever epped,' he thought to himself in silent criticism. 'What pity he insists on torturing himself all his life long with ese meaningless apprehensions and insoluble mysteries!'

He strolled up slowly to his own gate. In the garden, s wife was busy with the geraniums—a pretty young rl, in a light summer dress and a big straw hat that ited her admirably. 'Ida,' he cried out, as he swung pen the wicket, 'who do you think is stopping at the ion? I met him just now, in Middle Mill Fields, doing water-colour of Dumaresq's cottage. Why, Linnell of hrist Church. You recollect, I've often told you all out him.'

'What, the lame man, Reggy, who had the dog that n after the Proctor?'

'Well, he used to be lame once, but he isn't now a t—at least, not to speak of: you'd hardly notice it. ill, though the lameness itself's gone, it seems to have t him just as sensitive and nervous as ever—or a great al more so. He's coming up here this afternoon to ll on you, though, and you'll be able to judge of him en for yourself: but as far as I can see, there's nothing earth left for the man to be sensitive about. Make uch of him, Ida: he's as timid as a girl; but he's a nice low for all that, in spite of his little mysteries and ystifications.'

'He's a painter, too, isn't he?' Mrs. Mansel asked, ranging a flower in her husband's button-hole. 'I ink you showed me some things of his once at the rosvenor or the Academy.'

'Yes; he daubs like the rest of us—does the Nubian rl trick and the Street in Cairo dodge; not badly her. But he's taken all that up since I last saw him. e was the merest amateur in black and white when we re at Oxford together. Now he paints like a man o's learnt his trade, though he rather overdoes things the matter of elaboration. Works at textures till you n't see the picture for the painting. But I don't lieve he can live on his art, for all that. He's rich, I agine, though for some strange reason he won't allow

But that's his way. He's full of all sorts of little

fads and fancies. He makes it a rule never to admit anything, except by torture. He's an American born, and he calls himself an Englishman. He spends money right and left, and he calls himself a pauper. He's straight and good-looking, and he calls himself a cripple. His name is Linnell, and he calls himself Linnéll. In fact, he's all made up of endless little ideas and affectations.'

'There's a Sir Austen Linnéll down our way in Rutland,' his wife said musingly as they turned towards the house, 'and *he* calls himself Linnéll too, with the accent the same way on the second syllable. Perhaps your friend and the Rutland man may be some sort of relations.'

'Can't, my dear child. Don't I tell you he's American? No baronets there: Republican simplicity. Boston born, though he hates to be told so. The star-spangled banner's a red rag to him. Avoid chaffing him, for heaven's sake, about the hub of the universe.'

They had entered the drawing-room while they spoke by the open French windows, and Mrs. Mansel, in a careless way, took up from the table by the corner sofa a Grosvenor catalogue. 'Ah, this must be he,' she said, turning over the leaves to the alphabetical list: 'See here—"329, the Gem of the Harem; 342, By the Edge of the Desert: Charles Austen Linnell." Why, Reggy, just look: his name's Austen; and he spells it with an *e* too, exactly like the Rutland people. I don't care what ever *you* choose to say—American or no American, he and the Austen Linnells of Thorpe *must* be related to one another.'

Her husband took the little book from her hand incredulously. 'Not possible,' he murmured, gazing hard at the page. 'I'm not quite sure, but I fancy I've heard it said at Christ Church there was something wrong somewhere about the family pedigree. Linnell's father made his money out of a quack medicine or something of the sort over in America, and sent his son to Oxford accordingly, to make a gentleman of him, and get rid of the rhubarb and sarsaparilla. They say Linnell would never go back to his native land again after he took his degree, because he hated to see all the rocks on the

dson River and all the peaks of the White Mountains
stered over in big white letters with the touching
ription, "Use only Linnell's Instantaneous Lion Liver
s." At least, so Gregory of Brasenose told me, and
father, I fancy, was once an *attaché* or *chargé*
faires at Washington.'

'But how does he come to be called Austen, then?'
. Mansel went on with true feminine persistency,
king to her point like a born woman, 'And Austen
h an *e* too! That clinches the argument. If it was
y an *i*, now, it might perhaps be accidental: but don't
elling me Austen with an *e* comes within the limits of
thing less than a miraculous coincidence.'

Her husband glanced over her shoulder once more at
catalogue she had seized and examined a second
e. 'It's odd,' he said after a pause—'distinctly odd.
e the finger of design in this, undoubtedly. It can't
ccident, as you justly remark with your usual acumen:
e coincidence, as you observe, always stops short at
netic spelling. And now you mention it, I remember
Austen does spell his name with an *e* certainly:
ad a cheque from him once for "The Smugglers'
uge"—that picture we let go too cheap, Ida. But
e are two ways of accounting for it, all the same:
e are always at least two good ways of accounting for
ything—except the action of a hanging committee.
her Linnell's descended from a younger branch of the
land family, which went out to America in the *May-*
er—all good Boston people, I understand, made it a
t of honour to go out in the *Mayflower*, which must
e had accommodation for at least as many first-class
n passengers as the whole fleet that came over with
liam the Conqueror—or else, failing that, his excellent
a must with rare forethought have christened him
ten in order to produce a delusive impression on
public mind in future years that he belonged to a dis-
uished and aristocratic county family. Godfathers
godmothers at one's baptism do often perpetrate
e pious frauds. I knew a man once whose real sur-
e was plain Dish; but his parents with great presence
mind christened him Spencer Caven, so he grew up to

be Spencer Cavendish, and everybody thought he wa
second cousin of the Duke of Devonshire.'

Mrs. Mansel, for her part, had been educated at Girt
So superficial a mode of settling a question by pure gu
work offended her views of logical completeness.

'It's no use arguing *a priori*, Reginald,' she s
seriously, 'upon a matter of experience. We can ask
Linnell about it when he comes here this afternoon.
invited Mr. Dumaresq and Psyche to drop in for a se
tennis, and your Christ Church friend 'll be just in t
for it.'

When Mrs. Mansel got upon *a priori* and *a poster*
her husband, who was only a painter, after all, knew
place too well to answer her back in the same dial
He only stared at the catalogue harder than ever, a
wondered to himself in a vague way why Linnell sho
call himself Austen.

But at that very moment, at the Red Lio. the ar
himself was sitting down at the little davenport to d
off a hasty and excited note to his agent in London:

'DEAR MATTHEWS,

'Can you get some fellow who knows all ab
such things to give you an exhaustive list of all the pu
libraries or institutions in Great Britain, Ireland, Ameri
or the colonies, to which a man interested in the ma
might present a complete set of Haviland Dumares
"Encyclopædic Philosophy"? The bigger the number
can hunt up the better. Perhaps the people at the Lon
Institution would put you in the way of finding it
In any case, try to draw up a big catalogue, and forw
it here to me at your earliest convenience. But on
account let anyone know why you want the informat
I've sent a cheque for fifty guineas to that poor fellow
wrote about at Colchester: many thanks for calling
attention to his painful case. Only I could have wis
he wasn't a German. Teutonic distress touches me l
nearly. Never mind about buying-in those New Zealan
at present. I see another use for the money I meant
put in them. In breathless haste to save post,

'Yours ever sincerely,

'CHARLES AUSTEN LINNELL.'

'There,' he said to himself as he folded it up and consigned it to its envelope: 'that'll do a little good, I hope, for Dumaresq. The only possible use of money to a fellow like me, whose tastes are simple, and whose wants are few, is to shuffle it off as well as he can upon others who stand in greater need of it. The worst of it is, one spends one's life, in that manner, perpetually steering between the Scylla of pride and the Charybdis of pauperism. The fellows who really need help won't take it, and the fellows who don't need it are always grabbing at it. There's a deal too much reserve and sensitiveness in the world—and I've got my own share too, as well as the rest of them.'

CHAPTER III.

LOVE—THIRTY.

WHEN Linnell appeared upon the Mansels' tennis-ground at half-past three that afternoon, it was in quite other garb from the careless painter suit he had worn on the hillside in the incognito of morning. He was arrayed now in the correctest of correct gray tweeds, and the most respectable of round felt hats, in place of the brown velveteens and Rembrandt cap wherewith he had sallied forth, to the joy of all young Petherton, at early morn for his day's sketching. Yet it was difficult to say in which of the two costumes he looked handsomest—the picturesque artistic suit of the cosmopolitan painter, or the simple rough homespun country dress of the English gentleman. Linnell was tall, and very dark: his deep black eyes were large and expressive; and his rough beard and moustache, trimmed with a certain loose touch of artistic freedom, gave a decided tone of manliness and vigour to what might otherwise have seemed too purely cultivated and refined a face. As it was, nobody could look at Charles Linnell without seeing in him at a glance the best product of our English school and college training—a man first, and afterwards a gentleman.

As he crossed the lawn to where Mrs. Mansel sat on a rustic chair under the shade of the big umbrella-like lime

tree, he saw that two other visitors were already befor
him, each of whom equally attracted at once the artist
quick and appreciative eyes. The first was indeed a nob
presence—a tall and thin old man, gray-haired and gra
moustached, clad in a close-fitting light pea-jacket an
slouch hat, which seemed to bring out in singular relief th
full height and spareness of his long lithe figure. No on
could have passed that figure by unnoticed even in th
crowded streets of London. The old man's face was full
vividness, fire and innate majesty. Though close on sevent
he was young still in expression and bearing: he held h
gray head proudly erect, and the light that flashed fro
his keen and deep-set eyes was instinct even now wit
youthful vigour and unquenchable energy. The high arche
forehead, the projecting eyebrows, the sharp clear feature
the strong and masculine chin, the delicate mouth
instinct with irony, the powerful lines scored deep on th
thin cheeks and round the speaking corners of the acut
gray eyes, all told alike of profound intellectual strengt
and subtlety. The very movements of his limbs were fre
and unrestrained: he stood aside two steps for Linne
to approach with something of the statuesque Greek grace
fulness. The artist had no need to wait for an intro
duction. He felt sure instinctively it was Havilan
Dumaresq, the Encyclopædic Philosopher, who stood i
the flesh there visibly before him.

The other stranger, no less striking in her way, was a
young girl of sixteen or seventeen, in the first flush of
delicate pink-and-white, peach-like beauty. Linnell wa
so taken by her childish face and graceful form that he
had hardly time to bestow a passing glance upon the
maturer and more matronly attractiveness of thei
common hostess. Even so, he was but dimly aware
of a pair of soft and full round cheeks, mantled by
dainty suffused bloom, and with a temptingly rosy mouth
set full beneath them, too simple as yet to be even
coquettish. Linnell was a shy man, and Haviland
Dumaresq's presence at once overawed him. He was
so much agitated by the stately courtesy—a courtesy as
of the grand old courtly school—with which the great
thinker had stridden aside two paces to let him pass,

at he coul
r on her
gue haze
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Happily
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'Ida,' he
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y befor at he could fix his eyes steadily neither on Mrs. Mansel
artist r on her pretty little visitor. The lawn swam in a
l a nob gue haze of uncertainty around him, out of all which
nd gra ly the tall spare figure on the one hand, and that pair
ket an rose-petal cheeks on the other, loomed distinctly
elief th ible through the mist of his own shyness on his
No on rturbed and unsteady mental vision.
n in th Happily Mansel came forward to his aid in the nick of
as full me.
seven 'Ida,' he said to his wife as she rose from her seat to
held h eet and greet the new comer, 'this is my friend Linnell
ed fro whom you've heard me speak often. Linnell, let me
ow wit troduce you to Mr. Dumaresq, whose work you know
h arche d appreciate so deeply already. Psyche, this is a
feature ar old Oxford friend of mine: he paints pictures, so
mouth u're sure to like him.'
p on th Linnell bowed all round at each introduction with
he acut echanical politeness. So many new acquaintances all
strengt once, one of them distinguished, and two pretty, were
vere fre r too much for his unstable composure. He muttered
Linne me inarticulate conventional phrase, and looked about
k grace m uncomfortably at the lawn and the garden.
n intro Haviland Dumaresq himself was the first to break the
Iavilan wkward silence
stood i 'Linnell,' he repeated in a rich and powerful but very
lvery voice: 'I hope I caught the name correctly—
, was a innell. Ah, yes; I thought so. One seldom catches
sh of name right at a first introduction, because all hearing
ell wa largely inference; and here, where no context exists
that h guide one's guesses, inference is impossible. The
on the orld is all before one where to choose: any one name
f thei just as likely to occur in an introduction as another.
aware ou said Linnéll, with the accent on the last, I notice,
d by a Iansel. I'm a student of names—among other things'
mouth —and he looked the artist keenly in the face with a
e even earching glance. 'I've only met the name, so ac-
aviland ented, once before. Sir Austen Linnell was with me at
He was rinity—not the present man, of course—his father,
tesy as e General. They're all Sir Austen Linnells in suc-
e great ession in the Rutland family—have been ever since the
n pass estoration, in fact, when the first man was created

a Baronet for welcoming King Charles the mome
he landed.'

'Mr. Linnell's name's Austen, too,' Mrs. Mansel p
in suavely, as she reseated herself with Girtonian gra
on the rustic chair. 'We happened to look you up
the Grosvenor Catalogue this morning, Mr. Linne
— I couldn't recollect the name of that swe
picture of yours, "The Gem of the Harem": Regg
and I admired it immensely this year on varnishing da
And there we found you set down at full length
Charles Austen Linnell, you know; and we wonder
whether you mustn't be related to the Rutland people.'

'Austen with an *e*,' Haviland Dumaresq interpose
with great gravity. 'Names of similar sound b
different in spelling are almost always of distinct origi
Phonetic decay assimilates primarily unlike word
Tur*ner*, for example, is only plain turner, a man wh
puts wood in a lathe for chairs and tables; but Tur*n*
with an *o*, like the Turnors of Norfolk, are really To
Noirs, of Norman origin. There the assimilation
obviously late and obviously phonetic.' For it was
peculiarity of Haviland Dumaresq's mind, as Linne
so learned, that he saw nothing—not even the mere
small-talk—as isolated fact: every detail came to hi
always as a peg on which to hang some abstract generali
zation. The man was pure philosopher to the core: h
lived in the act of organizing events by squads an
battalions into orderly sequence. To Linnell himsel
however, the timely diversion came very pleasantly: h
nated his own personality, or his own name even, t
form the subject of public discussion.

But he wasn't permitted to rejoice over the side-issu
long. Mrs. Mansel brought the conversation back agai
at a bound, with feminine instinct, to the purely persona
and immediate question.

'Mr. Linnell spells *his* Austen with an *e*, too,' sh
said briskly. 'I suppose, Mr. Linnell, you're a membe
of the same old Rutland family?'

Haviland Dumaresq turned round upon him onc
more with a strange display of earnest interest. Linne
hesitated. His face was crimson.

'Of the same family,' he repeated after a pause, with ious reluctance; then he added with a little sidelong, spicious look: 'but the younger son of a younger son y. I hardly even know my cousin, Sir Austen, the d of the house. Junior branches are seldom held of ch account, of course, in an English family.'

'Primogeniture is a great injustice to the elder sons,' viland Dumaresq murmured reflectively in his measured es. 'It deprives them of all proper stimulus to action. condemns them to a life of partridge-shooting and nner-giving. It stunts and dwarfs their mental faculties. robs them of all that makes life worth living. Still, has its compensating advantages as well, in the long- n, for the nation at large. By concentrating the whole rtune of able and successful families—judges, bishops, w peers, and so forth, the cream of their kind, who ve risen by their own ability to the top, leaving the ere skim-milk of humanity at the bottom—on one ngle rich and useless representative, the scapegoat, as were, of the family opulence, it turns the younger sons drift upon the world, with their inherited intellect for eir sole provision, and so urges them on to exceptional ffort, in order to keep up their positions in society, and ealize their natural expectations and the hopes of their up- ringing. I'm not sure that it isn't a good thing, after l, for an aristocratic community that a certain number its ablest members should be left to shift for them- lves by their own wits, and, after having been brought p in comfort and luxury with a good education, should e forced at last to earn their own living in the hard truggle for life which is the rule of nature.'

'But all younger sons are not poor,' the girl they called Psyche put in blushingly.

Linnell turned to her with a quick, keen glance.

'Not quite all, perhaps,' he said with a decisive accent; but so large a proportion of the total sum, that you may almost take it for granted about any of them whenever you meet one.'

His interposition turned the current of the conversa- ion. They sat for a few minutes talking trivialities bout the beauty of the place and Linnell's first im-

pressions of Petherton Episcopi; then Mansel said, turning to the philosopher:

'Where do you think I picked up my friend this morning, Mr. Dumaresq? He was at work on the slope yonder, sketching your cottage.'

'It's a pretty cottage,' Dumaresq answered with a slight inclination of his leonine head. 'So bright and fluffy. The prettiest place I've ever seen. I've always admired my own cottage.'

'Oh, papa,' Psyche broke in, red-faced, incidentally settling for Linnell, off-hand, the hitherto moot-question of her personal identity, 'it's so *very* tiny!'

'For you, my child, yes,' the father answered tenderly. 'But for me, no. It exactly fits me. My niche in nature is a very humble one. In all those matters I'm a perfect Stoic of the old school. I ask no more from fate or fortune than the chances of the Cosmos spontaneously bestow upon me.'

'It makes a very pretty sketch,' Linnell interposed gently, in his diffident way. 'Will you allow an old admirer of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy"—perhaps one of your earliest and most devoted adherents—to present it to you as a memento—a disciple's fee, so to speak—when finished?'

Dumaresq looked him back in the face with an undecided air. He drummed his fingers dubitatively on his knee for a minute. Then, 'You are a professional artist?' he asked slowly.

'A professional artist? Well, yes, of course; I sell my pictures—whenever I can; and as far as I'm able, I try to live upon them.'

'Then I must *buy* the sketch,' Dumaresq answered, with a quiet and stately decision in his manner. 'If you'd been an amateur, now, I would gladly have accepted it from you; but I, too, am a workman, and I have my principles. In art, as in literature, science, and thought, the labourer, we remember, is worthy of his hire. I should like to have a fitting presentment of our little home. It would be nice for Psyche to possess it hereafter.'

The calm dignity and precision of his tone took Linnell

fairly by surprise. The man couldn't have spoken with more majestic carelessness if he had been the lordly owner of five thousand acres, commissioning a Leighton or an Alma Tadema. Yet Linnell had only to look at his own studiously simple threadbare dress, and the neat quietness of his daughter's little print, to see that five pounds was a large matter to him. The picture when completed would be worth full fifty,

'We won't quarrel about that,' the artist said hastily, with a little deprecatory wave of his white hand. 'I'll show you the sketch as soon as it's finished, and then we may perhaps effect an equitable exchange for it. Or at least'—and he glanced shyly on one side towards Psyche —'I may possibly be permitted to offer it by-and-by for Miss Dumaresq's acceptance.'

The old man was just about to answer with a hurried refusal, when Mansel intervened with a pacificatory remark. 'Linnell was telling me this morning,' he said, dragging it in by all-fours, 'how greatly he admired and respected your philosophic system. He has all your doctrines at his fingers' ends; and he was quite surprised to find an ungrateful world didn't crowd to Petherton in its millions, by excursion train, to pay you the tribute of its respect and consideration. He means to have some royal confabs with you on Dumaresquian subjects whenever you can spare him an hour or two of your valuable leisure.'

'Papa sees so few people here who care at all for the questions he's interested in,' Psyche said, looking up, 'that he's always delighted and pleased when he really lights upon a philosophic visitor and gets a chance of exchanging serious opinions.'

The old man's face flushed like a child's with ingenuous pleasure: appreciation came so late to him, and came so rarely, that it went to his heart with pathetic keenness; but he gave no sign of his emotion by spoken words. He merely answered, in the same sonorous silvery voice as before: 'Philosophy has necessarily a restricted audience. Intelligence being the special property of the few, the deeper and wider and more important a study, the narrower must needs be the circle of its possible students,'

Mrs. Mansel tapped her parasol impatiently. Girton-bred as she was, she yet believed by long experience it was possible to have too much of poor dear old Dumaresq.

'Psyche, my child,' she said, yawning under cover of her Japanese fan, 'shall we go on now and have our game of tennis?'

They fell into their places in the court as if by accident, Psyche and the new-come artist on one side, Mansel and his wife opposite them on the other. Dumaresq sat by observant, and watched the play; it always interested him to look on at tennis: the run of the balls is so admirably pregnant with suggestive ideas for sidereal motions!

As for Psyche, she never before had enjoyed a game with anyone so much. Linnell was so handsome, and played so admirably. In the excitement of the game, he had quite forgotten his lameness now, and remembered only the quick sight and nimble movement of his desert experiences. No man in England could play tennis better, indeed, when he managed to drop out of mind his infirmities; and that afternoon he was happily able to drop them altogether. He remembered only that Psyche was beautiful, and that to play with Haviland Dumaresq's daughter was something very different indeed from playing with the common nameless herd of squireen femininity on the lawn of the vicarage in some country village.

For to Linnell, Haviland Dumaresq's was so great a name as to throw some reflected halo even around Psyche.

As father and daughter walked home alone, after five o'clock tea, in the cool of the evening, to their tiny cottage—the old man tall, erect, and grim; Psyche one rosebud blush from chin to forehead—Haviland Dumaresq stopped for a second at the turn of the road, and gazing at his daughter with a lingering affection, said abruptly:

'I felt I must buy it. I was obliged to buy it. I couldn't take it from the man for nothing, of course. Whatever it costs, I shall have to pay for it.'

'How much is it worth, do you think, papa?' Psyche asked, half trembling.

'I know so little about this sort of thing,' the old

philosopher answered gravely; 'but I shouldn't be in the least surprised to learn he wanted as much as ten pounds for it.'

'Ten pounds is an awful lot of money!' Psyche cried, affrighted.

'Ten pounds is a very large sum indeed,' her father echoed, repeating the phrase in his own dialect. 'Too large a sum for anyone to waste upon a piece of paper with the image or simulacrum of a common dwelling-house scrawled in colour upon it. But there was no help for it; I had to do it. Otherwise, the man might have pressed the thing upon me as a mere present. And a present's an obligation I never can accept. We can save the necessary amount, perhaps, by giving up all needless luxuries for breakfast, and taking only tea and bread without butter.'

'Oh, papa!' Psyche murmured, aghast.

'Not you, my child, not you!' the father answered hurriedly. 'I never meant you, my darling—but myself and Maria. I think the existing culinary utensil calls herself Maria.'

'But, my dear, dear father——'

'Not a word, my child. Don't try to interfere with me. I know what's best for us, and I do it unhesitatingly. I must go through the world on my own orbit. The slightest attempt to turn a planet from its regular course recoils destructively upon the head of the aggressive body that crosses its cycle. I'm a planetary orb, obeying fixed laws: I move in my circuit undeterred and unswerving.'

They walked along a few yards farther in silence. Then Haviland Dumaresq spoke again.

'He belongs to a very good family, that painting young man,' he said, with a jerk of his head towards the Mansels'. 'The Linnells of Rutland are distinguished people. But he's a younger son, and worth nothing. A younger son, and got no money. Lives on his pictures. Worth nothing.'

'Papa!' Psyche cried in a ferment of astonishment, unable to suppress her surprise and wonder. 'What a funny thing for *you* to say—you of all men, who care nothing at all for money or position! He's very clever,

I think, and very handsome, and I know he's read the "Encyclopædic Philosophy."'

Dumaresq held his proud gray head prouder and higher still against the evening sky.

'I mean,' he said evasively, 'the young man's poor. An artist who hardly lives on his art. All the more reason, then (if it comes to that), to pay for his picture. His time's his money.'

But Psyche herself vaguely knew in her own heart that that was nothing more than an excuse and an afterthought. She knew what her father really meant. She knew and wondered. For never before in all her life had Psyche Dumaresq heard that austere philosopher reckon up any man by his fortune or his family. And why should he make so unfavourable an exception against so pleasant a person as this new young painter?

She didn't understand the simple and well-known human principle that no man is a philosopher when he has daughters to marry.

CHAPTER IV.

A PROPHET IS NOT WITHOUT HONOUR.

THE next evening Linnell was to dine quietly at General Maitland's. Only a few Petherton friends to meet him—'Quite a simple affair, you know, Mr. Linnell: the regulation country-town entertainment: our next-door neighbours: just to introduce you to whatever there is of society at Petherton Episcopi.' The Mansels were coming: of course the Mansels: and the Vicar and his wife, and the Craigies from the Manor House.

'But not, I suppose, that old bore Dumaresq, and that gawky girl of his?' the General observed, as they sat in the drawing-room, demurely expectant, on the very stroke of half-past seven. 'He talks me off my legs with his crack-jaw philosophy. You haven't asked *them*, I do hope, Maria.'

'Do you take me for a fool, George?' Mrs. Maitland answered with severe dignity, drawing herself up austerely

to her full height. 'Geraldine begged me to ask them, I need hardly say: she has no common-sense at all, poor dear Geraldine: but I was firm upon that point, perfectly firm'—and Mrs. Maitland's high-bred chin and thin lips of the Vere de Vere caste showed her firmness most distinctly as she spoke. 'I put my foot down upon that sort of nonsense once for all. I said to her plainly: Geraldine, you may form what undesirable acquaintances you like for yourself, but you shall not drag your poor papa and me into the thick of your vulgar society. I've called upon that horrid old man and his daughter on your account, and I very much regret now that I ever did it. It lets us in for endless complications. The Dumaresqs are people who move in a different grade of society from our own, and any attempt to take them out of it and put them into one for which they are not fitted can only be painful, and even ignominious, to both parties. I said it plainly to her, "even ignominious." The fact is, George, we ought never to have known them. When one has to deal with a girl of poor dear Geraldine's unfortunate temperament, the only way to do is to resist at once from the very beginning all her absurd fads and fancies.'

The General sighed. 'It's a pity she won't be more practical,' he said with a faint reluctance in his voice, for he admired Geraldine. 'She's a fine girl, though she's our own daughter, Maria, and, by George! I like her for it. I like to see a girl stick up for her opinions. Still, it's a great pity, I don't deny, she won't be more practical. If only she'd take a fancy, now, to this young Linnell there!'

'This young Linnell has money,' Mrs. Maitland assented curtly, arranging a spray of maidenhair in a specimen glass on the table by the bow-window. 'I'm sure he has money. He won't admit it; but it's perfectly clear to anybody with half an eye. He couldn't live as he does upon his pictures only.'

'And you think?' the General observed suggestively.

'I think he hasn't come down here for nothing, naturally,' Mrs. Maitland went on with marked emphasis. 'He was very much struck with Geraldine at Algiers, I

feel sure; but his head's stuffed as full of flighty sentimental nonsense as her own; and if he's thrown in with that blushing bread-and-butter slip of a girl of poor old Dumaresq's he'll fancy himself in love with her just because she's poor and pretty and a nobody. That kind of man always does go and throw himself away upon a nobody, unless he's closely watched, and protected by others against his own folly. Geraldine's built the very same way. Nothing on earth would give her greater delight, I'm sure, than to marry a penniless poet, or painter, or music-master, and end her days with him comfortably in the workhouse.'

The General toyed with the Japanese paperknife uneasily. 'It's a great pity she can't get settled,' he said after a pause. 'With Hugh's expenses at Sandhurst so very heavy; and Gordon at Aldershot always asking for remittances, remittances, and again remittances, till one's sick and tired of it; and the two boys at the Charterhouse eating their heads off and doing nothing; it's really very much to be regretted, indeed, that she can't find anybody anywhere to suit her. And yet, Maria, I sympathize a great deal, after all, with Geraldine. A girl naturally prefers to wait and watch till she's found the man that really suits her.'

'It's not as if she met no young men,' Mrs. Maitland went on, ignoring quietly her husband's last rebellious sentence, 'or never had any suitable offers. I'm sure no girl in England has been given better or greater chances. She was very much admired, indeed, at Aldershot: she goes to all the dances in Algiers; she's been up in town for three seasons running: she travels about fifty times more than most girls do: and that man in the 42nd with the scar on his cheek would certainly have married her if only she'd have taken him, stammer or no stammer. I never knew anyone more difficult to please or more impossible for an anxious mother to count upon.'

Their conversation was cut short abruptly at that moment by the entry of the peccant Geraldine in person. She was tall and dark, with fine features, a little marred, perhaps, by a certain conscious pride and dignity; but her strong chin was instinct with character, and her

upright carriage spoke her at once a woman with a will not to be bent even by a conscientiously worldly mother like Mrs. Maitland. Her father looked up at her with a glance of sidelong, surreptitious approbation as she entered. 'Those passion-flowers become you, Geraldine,' he said, with a furtive side-look at his formidable wife. 'They're very pretty. Where did you get them?'

'Psyche gave them to me,' Geraldine answered with a careless touch or two of her fingers on the drooping spray that hung gracefully down from her shapely neck over the open bosom. 'They have a pale-blue passion-flower growing over their porch, you know, and Psyche picked me a few blossoms off it to wear this evening. She's such a dear, always. They *do* look well, I think. Unusual things like that always suit me.'

'You went round there this afternoon, then?' her mother asked.

Geraldine nodded a quiet assent.

'Psyche asked me to come round,' she said. 'She's full of Mr. Linnell. She wanted to know from me all about him.'

Mrs. Maitland glanced up sharply with quick, inquiring eyes.

'Why, what on earth does she know of him?' she inquired half angrily. 'Has she met him anywhere?'

'She met him yesterday afternoon at the Mansels',' Geraldine answered shortly.

'And what did you tell her, Geraldine? You didn't let her know he was rich, I suppose, did you?'

'How could I, mother? He always implies himself that he isn't. Even if I thought it, which I've no reason to do, it would be very wrong of me to say so to Psyche. I told her he was a most agreeable young man, though painfully shy and awkward and nervous, and that we knew him only as an English painter who often wintered in Egypt or Algeria.'

Mrs. Maitland breathed more freely for a moment. Next instant there came a small ring at the bell, and the servant, entering, announced Mr. Linnell, followed in a minute more by both the Mansels.

Linnell took Geraldine in to dinner; but being the

guest of the evening, he was sandwiched in between herself and her mother, an arrangement which ensured the possibility for Mrs. Maitland of exercising throughout an efficient supervision over Geraldine's conversation with the eligible stranger.

'And how do you like Petherton now you've fairly settled down to it?' Mrs. Maitland asked him as the soup went round. 'Have you found any subjects for sketching yet, Mr. Linnell?'

The young man looked up with an embarrassed smile. If there was anything on earth that his soul hated it was 'being trotted out,' on his art especially; and he saw quite clearly that Mrs. Maitland meant to trot him out in due course this evening, in order to exhibit his paces properly before the admiring eyes of Petherton society.

'Yes,' he answered shyly, with half an appealing glance towards Mrs. Mansel opposite; 'I began to sketch a sweet little cottage on the hillside yesterday; and when I'd got half-way through with it, I learnt, to my surprise, it was no less a personage's than Haviland Dumaresq's. I'd no idea, Mrs. Maitland, you had so great a man as the Encyclopædic Philosopher living in your neighbourhood.'

'Oh yes, Mr. Dumaresq's very clever, I believe,' Mrs. Maitland answered somewhat frigidly, with the austere manner which the British matron thinks it proper to adopt when speaking of people who are 'not exactly in our set, you know, dear.' 'He's very clever, I've always understood, though hardly the sort of person, of course, one quite cares to mix with in society. He wears such extremely curious hats, and expresses himself so very oddly sometimes. But he's clever in his own way, extremely clever, so people tell me, and full of information about all the ologies. We have a great many of these local celebrities about here, don't you know. There's our postman's a very clever person too. Why, he writes the most amusing New-Year addresses, all in verse, which he brings round every year when he calls to get his Christmas-box. Geraldine, don't you think you could hunt up some of Briggs's verses to show Mr. Linnell, if he's interested in that kind of thing, you know, dear?'

A faint smile played round the corners of Linnell's

mouth at the juxtaposition in Mrs. Maitland's mind of Haviland Dumaresq and the postman poet; but politeness prompted him to say nothing. Comment on his part on such a subject would have been wholly superfluous. He answered not the fool according to her folly. Geraldine, however, could hardly imitate him: she looked up, one flush of sympathetic shame from chin to forehead, and answered quickly: 'No, mother; I don't think I could find them anywhere; and even if I did, I don't think Mr. Linnell would care in the least to see them. You've met the Dumaresqs, Mr. Linnell; so Psyche's been telling me. She says her father's always so glad to come across anybody who's read his books. He's a wonderful old man, so wholly absorbed and swallowed up in his work. He lives for nothing on earth, I do believe, but two things now—Philosophy and Psyche.'

'Two very good things indeed to live for,' Linnell murmured, almost inaudibly. 'I hardly know how he could do better.'

'Yes, he's wasted his life on writing books that were of no earthly use to himself or to anybody,' Mrs. Maitland went on, taking up the thread of her daughter's parable; 'and I've no doubt, now his girl's growing up, he bitterly repents he didn't turn his talents earlier in life to something more useful, that would have brought him in a little money. A gentleman born—for he was once a gentleman—to live contentedly in such a hovel as that! But he was always headstrong, and so's the girl. He never cared for anybody's advice. He was offered a good place under Government once, but he wouldn't take it. He had no time to waste, he said, on making money. He went his own way, and wrote his own useless unsaleable books for his own amusement. And what on earth he lives upon now, nobody hereabouts can ever imagine.'

'His "Philosophy" has had a very small circulation, no doubt,' Linnell ventured to put in apologetically, at the first pause in Mrs. Maitland's flowing river of speech; 'but it has received an immense amount of attention at the hands of all profound thinkers. It gains every day

more and more adherents among the most intelligent classes in every country. I believe it will prove to be the philosophy of the future.'

'I don't care much about these "everythings of the future" that we hear such a precious lot of talk about nowadays,' the General put in from the head of the table; 'the music of the future, the politics of the future, the tactics of the future, and all that sort of thing. For my part, I'm quite content to live in the present, where it has pleased a wise Providence to place me, and leave the future to provide its own philosophy, and its own music, and its own tactics, too, whenever it happens to want them. I'm for the present day all round, I am. But I must say I think Dumaresq's a very fine soldierly kind of man in his own way, too; he's been set at his post to hold Philosophy, like a forlorn hope, and he sticks to it bravely in spite of everything. He thinks he's got his work cut out for him in life. I don't know whether it's good work or bad; I don't understand these things myself: I don't pretend to. In my day soldiers weren't expected to take up philosophy: this wretched examination system that bothers us now hadn't even been invented: we fought and bled and did our duty, and that was all the country asked or wanted of us. It didn't inquire whether Nelson or Wellington had passed an examination in English literature. But Dumaresq thinks he's called upon by nature or his commanding officer to see this business through to the bitter end, come what may: and he sees it through, right or wrong: and by George, sir, I say, I honour him, too, for it. I've never read a line the fellow's written, and if I did read it, I don't suppose I'd understand a single word of the whole lot, for I've hard enough work to understand what the dickens he's driving at when he's talking, even—let alone when he's writing for the people who can follow him: but I can see he thinks he's sticking to his post, and, hang it all! when a fellow sticks to his post like a brick, if he's only a marine, you know, you can't help admiring him for it.'

'I quite agree with you,' Linnell answered, looking up hastily with most unusual decision. 'Havilan

Dumaresq's a very great man, and the way he sticks to his work in life commands one's respect, whatever one may or may not think of his particular opinions.'

'Many of them very questionable,' the Vicar remarked parenthetically.

'But most of them profoundly true and original,' Linnell answered with quiet dignity.

Mrs. Maitland's feminine quickness told her at once that she had started on quite the wrong tack with Linnell, so she made haste diplomatically to retrieve her position.

'Oh, of course, he's a wonderful man in his way,' she said, with conciliating promptitude. 'Just look at the things he's fixed up in the garden for drawing water by hydraulic pressure or something, don't they call it? I know he's a very remarkable man. And what a picturesque, funny little cottage! So you're really sketching it!'

'It *is* picturesque,' Linnell answered, with a fresh return of his engrained dislike to hearing himself or his work talked about. 'The porch is so pretty, all covered with those lovely hanging creepers. I suppose Dumaresq —it seems absurd to speak of so great a man as that as "Mister Dumaresq"—takes care of it himself. I never saw creepers grow better even in Africa.'

'Aren't they just lovely?' Geraldine interposed quickly. 'They always remind me so of dear old Algeria. These passion-flowers I'm wearing came from there. Psyche gave them to me.'

And she handed a stray one from the folds of her dress for Linnell to examine. The painter took it and looked at it closely.

'Miss Dumaresq gave it you!' he said slowly. 'She's very pretty. I should like her to sit to me. In Moorish costume, she'd be the very person for the foreground of that doorway I began at Algiers. You remember the sketch, Miss Maitland; I showed you the study I made for it there: a horseshoe archway in an inner courtyard near the Bab-Azzoun gate, with an Arab girl in indoor dress just stepping out with a tray in her hands among the palms and bananas.' And as he spoke, he thrust the

passion-flower without a word into his own button-hole, and pinned it in as if half unconsciously with a pin from the flap of his evening waistcoat.

Geraldine noticed his action with a quiet smile. He had money, she believed; and Psyche liked him.

'She's the very girl for it, Mr. Linnell,' she cried, with unwonted graciousness. Mrs. Maitland by this time had become engaged in conversation by the amiable Vicar. 'Of course I remember your sketch perfectly. You must get her to sit for you. She'd be delighted, I'm sure. Now, do please go to-morrow and ask her.'

'I will,' Linnell answered, anxious once more to escape the subject—for here he was, talking a second time about his own pictures. 'I'm going there, as it happens, to dinner the evening. I'll take the opportunity to ask her then if she'll give me sittings.'

Geraldine started.

'To dinner to-morrow!' she cried. 'To dinner at the Dumaresqs'! Why, that's quite a new departure for them. I never heard of their asking anybody to dinner before. Lunch sometimes, or afternoon tea; but that's the outside. How very funny! I don't quite understand it.'

'But I do,' Linnell answered. 'I'm going, and the Mansels too. We're all invited.'

Geraldine paused for a moment in surprise. Then she added in an undertone:

'Psyche never said a word of it to me, which is very queer, for I was over there with her the whole afternoon, and she generally tells me everything that happens.'

'She didn't know herself, no doubt,' the painter replied with a glance at his button-hole. 'Dumaresq met Mansel and me in the lane about six, and asked us then whether we'd come and dine with them, quite unceremoniously. He seemed rather preoccupied and dreamy this evening. He probably asked us on the spur of the moment, and only went home to tell her afterwards.'

'Probably,' Geraldine answered, with a falling face and a slight sigh. 'He seemed preoccupied and dreamy this

evening, did he? He's sometimes so. I'm sorry to hear it. But I'm glad you've to dine at Psyche's to-morrow, anyhow. Now I won't let you off, remember. You must paint her in that picture.'

'But how about the Arab costume?' Linnell asked, his usual shyness disappearing for a moment. 'The portrait would be nothing without the haik and the yashmak.'

'I can lend you one,' Geraldine answered with great promptitude. 'I had it for the Newsomes' charades last season. It'll just suit her—a delicate creamy-white Arab wrap, with the loveliest salmon-pink silky covering.'

'Will you, though?' the painter cried, delighted. 'How very good of you! That's just what I want. The picture shall be painted, you may take my word for it, Miss Maitland. Thank you so much for your kind co-operation.'

At that moment Mrs. Maitland, disengaging herself one second from the Vicar's eye, strained her ears to the utmost to catch their conversation, while politely assenting to her neighbour's views on the best way of dealing with rural pauperism. She couldn't exactly make out what they were saying, but she was sure the conversation was unusually animated. She noted the tone of Linnell's voice, with its obvious note of pleasure and gratification, and she thought she even caught distinctly the words, 'Thank you so much for your kind' something or other.

Later on in the evening, while that safely plain Miss Craigie from the Manor House was putting her stock war-horse through its paces upon the big piano, Mrs. Maitland noticed, to her surprise and pleasure, that Linnell was wearing a passion-flower in his buttonhole.

'Why, what a pretty bouquet!' she said, glancing over at it archly. 'I think I know where you got *that* from, Mr. Linnell.'

Linnell looked down awkwardly at his buttonhole for a second in doubt. It was Psyche's passion-flower, from the creeper on the porch! How should he defend himself? A girl he had only once seen! Then a happy subterfuge flashed across his brain.

'Yes, Miss Maitland gave it me,' he answered, with

much boldness. 'It was one of the flowers she was wearing at dinner.'

In his timid anxiety to avoid the imputation of having got it from Psyche, he never saw himself what interpretation Mrs. Maitland must needs put upon his blush and his words. But that astute lady smiled to herself, and remarked inwardly that things seemed really to be coming to a head. Geraldine had given that young man a flower! And the young man for his part had worn it and blushed over it!

As the whole party of visitors walked home together from the Maitlands' that night, Mrs. Mansel turned to the young painter and said, with a meaning look:

'You and Geraldine seemed to get on very well together, Mr. Linnell, in spite of your objection to ladies' society.'

Linnell laughed.

'Her arctic smile thawed a little this evening,' he answered casually. 'Besides, we've found an interest in common. She means to help me in the get-up of a picture for which I hope Miss Dumaresq will give me a sitting.'

At that very moment, in the deserted drawing-room, Mrs. Maitland was saying in a confidential tone to her husband:

'Now, George, remember, when you go up to town next week, you must try to find out at your club the real facts about this young Linnell. Has he money or has he not? That's the question. We ought to make quite sure about his position and prospects before we let things go any further between him and Geraldine.'

'I think he's well off,' the General murmured in reply, beneath his moustaches.

'Think! Oh yes. I think so, too. But where one's daughter's happiness is at stake, you know, George, one oughtn't to rest satisfied with mere thinking; one ought, as the Kirkpatrick said, to "mak sicker." There's some sort of mystery hanging over the young man's head, I fancy. If he has money, why doesn't he marry, and take a country place, and keep his carriage, and hunt the county like other people?'

'Tastes differ,' the General murmured, with philosophic calm, as he lighted his cigar. 'Perhaps the young man doesn't care for hunting.'

'Perhaps not,' Mrs. Maitland replied loftily, curling her upper lip. 'But a young man of means ought to care for hunting: he owes it to society; and if he doesn't care, you may depend upon it, George, he has some good reason of his own for wishing to be singular; and not a very creditable reason, either.'

CHAPTER V.

A MODERN STOIC.

To Psyche Dumaresq it was a matter of much internal questioning next day why on earth her father had invited that charming Mr. Linnell to dinner. A dinner-party, on however humble a scale, at the Wren's Nest was an almost unheard-of novelty. And then, besides, her father had spoken to her somewhat slightingly of Mr. Linnell only the day before yesterday. What could he mean now by this sudden change of front? Why thus incontinently break through all the established rules of that Spartan household, and invite a perfect stranger to a lordly banquet? The thing was really little short of a miracle.

But Psyche would have been even more astonished still if only she could have known the cause of the change in her father's demeanour. It was a chance word dropped by Mansel in the course of conversation, implying that Linnell, for all his studious simplicity of dress and manner, had a good deal more money than he ever pretended to. Within all Psyche's previous experience, a man's possession of money, especially as fixed and certain income, had always to her father been a positive reason for not desiring the honour of his acquaintance. 'I dislike the society of men who don't earn their own living,' he used to say, in his quiet, restrained way. 'The necessity for work is the great humanizer. Those

who toil not, neither do they spin, can have but very imperfect sympathies, after all, with those who earn their own livelihood by the sweat of their brow. I'm not prejudiced against money, but I find moneyed folks generally distasteful to me. They may be very nice people in their own circle; but I don't care to let them intersect mine. I feel most at home among my brother-workers.' If Psyche could have known, therefore, the real reason why her father had invited Linnell to dine with them, her astonishment would indeed have reached its zenith.

As it was, however, she contented herself with making the very best preparations the house could afford for the little entertainment that magical evening; and whatever her dinner lacked in delicacies, it certainly more than made up in delicacy; for the flowers were of Psyche's own dainty arrangement, and the fruit was plucked from Psyche's own little garden, and the silk-wrought strip down the centre of the tablecloth had been stitched with that graceful arabesque pattern by Psyche's own pretty and deft little fingers.

When Linnell arrived, he was shown alone into the tiny drawing-room, and he had some minutes to himself to examine its contents before either Psyche or her father came down to receive him. The young man's respect for the author of the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy' gave a profound interest in his eyes to every detail in that small and severely furnished room. Most of the furniture, indeed—at least, whatever had any pretence to rank as a luxury—had been made by Haviland Dumaresq's own hands, and bore the impress of his stern and strictly stoical taste. On the carved oak over-mantel—two plain wooden slabs, supported by pillars of Ionic simplicity—lay an uncut copy of the Japanese translation of Dumaresq's great monumental work, with a framed photograph of a spare face, bearing beneath the simple inscription, 'John Stuart Mill, to Haviland Dumaresq.' The plain table by the window was covered with pamphlets, letters, and papers: Linnell took up casually the topmost of the lot, and saw at a glance it was a German dissertation 'On Certain Side-Aspects of the Dumaresquian Philosophy,' by two well-known Pro-

fessors at Bonn and Heidelberg. The next was a controversial religious work by a Polish Archbishop, 'On Rationalistic Ethics, and especially on the Dumaresquian Law of Reciprocity.' By their side lay a paper-covered Italian volume, bearing in its upper left-hand corner the manuscript words 'À Haviland Dumaresq, Hommage de l'Auteur.' Linnell glanced carelessly at the envelopes on the table. One of them was franked with a Chilian stamp; the other had printed across its top in blue letters, 'Bureau of Indian Affairs, Washington.' The gold medal that hung on the wall was the decoration of the Académie des Sciences at Paris: the diploma rolled up on the bookcase beyond conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws of the University of Vienna. And this was the man, known over the whole civilized world, who toiled hard for his daily bread in that tiny cottage at publishers' hackwork! This was the man whom Mrs. Maitland, in the comfortable villa on the hillside opposite, had complacently classed, in her local ignorance, with the postman poet!

Linnell's heart beat higher as he thought that by unobtrusive means he might yet be able to redress in part this great wrong of our money-grubbing society, and repay directly to Haviland Dumaresq some fraction of the debt which the world owed him. The list from his agent would arrive no doubt to-morrow morning, and Haviland Dumaresq would go to bed next evening (though he knew it not) a couple of hundred pounds or so the richer for the information. And that would be but the beginning of Linnell's work. He would not rest, he declared to himself with fervour, till Haviland Dumaresq, that greatest of thinkers, enjoyed the ease he deserved so richly.

As he turned to examine the books on the shelves—most of them works on philosophy or science, with flattering inscriptions from their authors on the title-page—the door opened, and Psyche entered. Linnell turned round and took her hand gracefully. If he had looked handsome before in his flannels and tennis suit, he looked still handsomer now in evening dress and with a slightly faded blue passion-flower stuck with tender

care in his left buttonhole. Psyche's quick eyes recognised that delicate blossom at once.

'Why, that's one of our own, Mr. Linnell,' she said, half startled. 'Did you pick it from the plant at the door as you came in, then?'

Linnell looked down at it with a hesitating glance.

'Well, no,' he said. 'The fact is, Miss Dumaresq, it's a present I've received. I was given it by a lady. Miss Maitland wore it at dinner last night. But,' he added quickly, as Psyche's face fell most unmistakably at that simple announcement, 'she told me it was you who'd given it to her, and I kept it accordingly as a little memento. I would prize anything that came from Haviland Dumaresq's cottage.'

'Let me get you another,' Psyche said, if only to hide her blushes. 'That one's withered.' And she put her hand out of the open window as she spoke, and pulled a blossom from the creeper that looked in at the mullions of the casement.

'Thank you,' Linnell answered, taking it from her with a certain picturesque awkwardness of manner. 'I shall keep them both.' And he folded the old one reverently as he spoke in a letter he drew from his waistcoat pocket. So much devotion to philosophy is rare; but Haviland Dumaresq was a man in a century —and Psyche was also a girl of a thousand.

They sat and talked with the constrained self-consciousness of youth and maiden for a few minutes, for Linnell was almost as shrinking as Psyche herself, and then Haviland Dumaresq entered to relieve them from their unwilling *tête-à-tête*. He was dressed in a very old and worn evening suit, yet carefully brushed and well preserved; his shirt-front and tie were of the whitest and neatest, and the keen gray eyes and grizzled beard showed even more distinctly than ever, so Linnell thought, the vigour and power of that marvellous brain that lay behind the massive and beetling-browed forehead. He bowed with all his usual stately courtliness to the young painter.

'I hope Psyche has been doing her duty as hostess?' the great man said in that clear and ringing silvery voice

of his. 'I've kept you waiting, I'm afraid; but the fact is, I overwrote my time, working at the new chapters on Dissimilation of Verbal Roots, and forgot to dress till twenty past seven. A mind much occupied with internal relations is apt to let external relations slip by unnoticed. You must have observed that yourself, no doubt, in painting.'

'Papa has always to be called two or three times over to every meal,' Psyche put in, laughing. 'And whenever I make a *soufflé* or anything of that sort, I always call him ten minutes beforehand, or else, you know, it's all gone flat before he comes out of his study to eat it.'

Just at that moment the Mansels arrived, and the whole party went in to dinner.

In spite of the bare little dining-room, and the one servant who acted alike as cook and parlour-maid, no dinner was ever prettier or better. It was simple, of course, and of few dishes: you can't expect much from a one-handed menage; but it bore the impress of a refined household, for all that: it had the nameless charm of perfect gracefulness, which is often wanting to the most sumptuous London entertainments. Linnell felt sure that Psyche had prepared most of it herself beforehand. The pudding was a cold one, and so was the mayonnaise of boiled fish; so that the one servant had nothing to look after in the kitchen but the clear soup and the one small joint. These details of the hidden domestic management, indeed, Linnell appreciated at once from his old African bachelor experience. But everything was dainty, light, and tempting: even the wine, though but a simple claret, was sound and old and of a choice vintage. Haviland Dumaresq's own conversation with Mrs. Mansel would alone have made any entertainment go off pleasantly. In his stately way, the old man, when once warmed up to talk, could fire off epigram after epigram in quick succession; and when he met a clever woman, who could toss him back the ball as fast as he delivered it, the game between them was well worth watching. Now, Ida Mansel was a clever woman, with just that particular gift of bandying back rapid question and answer which Dumaresq loved as

intellectual recreation; and Linnell was content to sit and listen to those two brisk disputants at their mimic conflict for half the evening, with only an occasional aside to Psyche, or a casual remark to his brother-painter. For Haviland Dumaresq's wit was keen and sharp as his thought was profound; and the contest of words with a pretty woman always stimulated his faculties to their very utmost, and brought out the flashing qualities of his vivid mind in the highest perfection.

After dinner, however, when Psyche and Mrs. Mansel had left the table, their conversation fell into a very different channel. A man who meets for the first time in his life one of his pet heroes, likes to make the best of his opportunities by learning as much as he possibly can about the living object of his admiration. Linnell admired Haviland Dumaresq far too profoundly not to be eagerly interested in every detail of his life and history. And Dumaresq, for his part, though he seldom talked of his own affairs, for he was the exact opposite of an egoist —too much absorbed in the world of things to g' much of his attention to that solitary unit of huma himself—yet broke loose for once, in the presence of one who loved his System, and in a certain grand, impersonal, unostentatious sort of way, gave a brief account of the gradual stages by which that System rose up step after step to full-grown maturity before his mental vision. Linnell listened with all the silent and attentive awe of a disciple as the old man related, bit by bit, how that wonderful conception of the nature of things took gradual concrete shape within him.

'You must have lived a very hard life while you were gathering together the materials for your great work,' the painter ventured to remark at last, as Dumaresq, pausing, raised his glass of claret to his lips to moisten his throat after the graphic recital. 'It must have taken you years and years to collect them.'

The old man gazed across at him with a sharp glance from those keen clear eyes. 'You are right,' he said impressively: 'years and years indeed it took me. For five-and-twenty years I did nothing else but master the

infinite mass of detail, the endless facts and principles which went to form the groundwork of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy." When I left Cambridge, now much more than forty years ago, I made up my mind to devote my life without stint or reserve to the prosecution of that single purpose. I meant to spend myself freely on the work. The goal shone already clear as day in the heavens before me; but I knew that in order to work my plan out in all its fulness I must give up at least ten years of my time to the prosecution of multifarious physical researches. The thing grew as such things always necessarily grow. Before I'd arrived at the preliminary mastery of facts which I felt to be indispensable for the development of my clue, I'd given up a full quarter of a century to the mere task of prior preparation. Then I said to myself my tutelage was over: I might begin to live. I wrote my first volume at once, and I also married. My work was done, all but to write it down. I thought I was justified in taking a little care, for the first time in my life, of my own comfort.'

'But if it isn't a rude question,' Linnell cried, all aglow with the reflected fervour of the old man's speech, 'how did you manage to live meanwhile, during the years you gave up to that long preparation?'

Haviland Dumaresq smiled grimly.

'Like a dog,' he answered with simple force: 'like a dog in a kennel. Wherever I was—in London, Paris, Berlin, Washington; for I followed my clue over Europe and America—I took myself a room in the workmen's quarter, as near as possible to the British Museum, or the Bibliothèque Nationale, or the Smithsonian Institute, or wherever else my chief scene of labour lay; and there I lived on bread and cheese and beer, or sometimes less, for years together, while I was working, and collecting, and observing, and arranging. When I look back upon the past, I wonder at it myself. A certain vivid apostolic energy bore me up then. It has evaporated now, and I've become luxurious. But I started in life with exactly fifteen hundred pounds. From the very outset I invested my money, and drawing the interest that accrued each year, I sold out the principal from time to

time, to live upon my capital, according as I wanted it. At first, the draughts upon the prime fund were long between; but as years went by and my capital decreased, I had to sell out more and more frequently. Saving and starving the hardest I could starve, sovereign by sovereign, it seemed to slip by me. I gave up the beer; I gave up the cheese; if I could, I would have given up the bread itself, I believe; but in spite of all it still slipped by me. At last, to my utter despair, I found myself one day reduced to my last fifty pounds, while I had still at least five years of solid work staring me in the face unperformed before me. Then I almost gave up all for lost. I fainted in the wilderness. As I sat alone that morning in a fireless room at mid-December, I hid my face in my hands and cried out in my misery. I asked myself why I should continue this task, no man compelling and no man thanking me for it; why I should shut myself out from home and wife and friends and children, and all that other men have always held dearest, for pure love of that vague abstraction, science. I almost gave up out of sheer despondency.'

'And what did you do at last?' Linnell asked, deeply interested.

'For a time I hardly knew what to do. I told my philosophic acquaintances (for I had a few in London) the whole facts of the case; and some of them asked me to come and dine with them, and some of them said it was very hard lines, and some of them proposed to make a fund to help me. But I wouldn't hear of that; even for Philosophy's sake, I was far too proud to accept alms from any man. I nearly broke down with anxiety and despair. Mill made interest for me with your kinsman, old Sir Austen Linnell, who had then charge of the Foreign Office; and Sir Austen tempted me with the offer of a consulship in Peru, which I almost accepted. So broken-hearted was I, that I almost accepted it. Six hundred a year, and collateral advantages. For once in my life the filthy lucre for a moment tempted me. But just at that instant, that critical instant, as luck would have it, an old uncle of mine in America died unexpectedly--a poor man, but he left me his

savings, some six hundred pounds all told; and it just pulled me through: it gave me the precise respite I needed. Six hundred pounds was wealth untold to me. I went to work again with redoubled vigour, and spent it every penny for the sake of the System. At the end of five years I sat down a beggar; but with the first volume of my precious book in good black print on my knees before me.'

Linnell drew a long breath.

'To you, Mansel,' he said, turning round to his friend, 'I suppose this is all an old, old story: but as for me, who hear it to-night for the first time, why it fairly takes my breath away. I call it nothing short of heroic.'

Mansel shook his head.

'It's as new to me, my dear fellow, as to you,' he answered in a low voice. 'Dumaresq has never before this evening told me a single word about it.'

The old philosopher sighed profoundly.

'What use?' he said, with a gesture of deprecation. 'Why trouble our heads about so small a matter? The universe swarms and teems with worlds around us. We men are but parasites on the warped surface of a tiny satellite of a tenth-rate sun, set in the midst of a boundless cosmos, whose depths are everywhere pregnant with problems. Why should we go out of our way, I wonder, to wring our hands over this fly or that; to discuss the history of any particular individual small parasite among us? The book got done at last: that's the great thing. The world at large may not care to look at it; but there it is, in evidence to this day, the monument of a lifetime, a germ of intellectual yeast cast loose into the fermenting thought of humanity, and slowly but surely assimilating to itself all suitable particles in that vast mass of inane and clashing atoms.'

They paused a moment, and gazed hard at their glasses. Dumaresq's earnestness held them spell-bound. Linnell was the first to break the solemn silence.

'It was a noble life,' he said, 'nobly wasted.'

To their immense astonishment, Haviland Dumaresq made answer energetically:

'Ay, wasted indeed! There you say true. Utterly,

inexpressibly, irretrievably wasted! And therein lies the sting of the whole story. If I had it all to live over again, of course, I'd waste it as freely a second time—I can't help that: nature has built me so that I must turn perforce to philosophy and science, and spill the wine of my life for the advancement of thought, as naturally as the moth flies into the candle, or the lemming drowns itself in the bays of the Baltic. But wasted it is, as you say, for all that. Now that I'm old, and can look down calmly from the pinnacle of age on the import of life, I see that the world itself is wiser in its generation than any one among its wayward children. The general intelligence, from which all individual intelligence derives itself, runs deeper and truer than any man's personality. The way of the world is the best way in the end, if we only had the sense to see it. *Si jeunesse savait, ou si vieillesse pouvait*, is the sum and substance of all experience. If I had my life to live over again, I'd live it as I've lived it, mistakes and all, I don't doubt, because it's the natural and inevitable outcome of my own perverse and unhappy idiosyncrasy. Philosophy lures me as gin lures drunkards. But if I had to advise any other person, any young man or woman beginning life with high ideals and noble aspirations, I'd say without hesitation: "The world is wisest. Go the way of the world and do as the world does. Don't waste your life, as I've wasted mine. Work for the common, vulgar, low, personal aims—money, position, fame, power. Those alone are solid. Those alone are substantial. Those alone make your life worth having to yourself. All the rest is empty, empty, empty, empty. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, except the vain things mean men wisely and meanly strive for."'

There was a long pause, and no one said anything. That awful cry of a bruised and broken spirit took their hearts by surprise. But through the closed door, the murmur of Psyche's voice in the drawing-room could be heard distinctly. The old man listened to it and smiled serenely. The cloud that had brooded over his forehead cleared away. Then he rose, and going to a hanging cupboard above the mantelshelf, took out a small round

box, and from it brought forth a little silver-coated pellet.

'It excites my nerves when I talk this way,' he said apologetically, as he washed the medicine down with half a glass of claret. 'I always require something to still my brain after speaking on these purely personal matters—they rouse the glands to unnatural activity. Mansel, will you have another glass of wine? No? Then suppose we join your wife and Psyche?'

CHAPTER VI.

A SLIGHT MISUNDERSTANDING.

LINNELL went home to the Red Lion well content that evening: for Haviland Dumaresq had poured out his full heart to him; and Psyche had given him her faithful promise to sit to him in Arab costume for his projected picture. Not that as yet he was in love with Psyche; love at first sight was alien to the artist's timid and shrinking nature; but he had recognised from the very first moment he saw her that he would be more capable of conceiving a grand passion for that beautiful girl than for any other woman he had ever met in the course of his wanderings. To begin with, was she not Haviland Dumaresq's daughter? and Linnell's reverence for the great thinker, in his solitude and poverty, was so profound and intense that that fact alone prepossessed him immensely from the very first in Psyche's favour. But even had she been the daughter of a Mrs. Maitland or a village innkeeper, Linnell could hardly have helped being interested in the pink-and-white maiden. He had sat and talked with her all the evening long in a convenient corner; he had drawn her out slowly, bit by bit, her shyness and reserve had made him almost forget his own; her innocent pleasure at the attention he paid her had flattered and delighted his sensitive spirit. Though Haviland Dumaresq had honoured him with his confidence, it was of Psyche he thought all the small-hours through; it was Psyche's voice, not the great philosopher's, that rang

in his ears as he lay awake and hugged himself; it was Psyche's eyes that made his heart flutter with unwonted excitement through the night-watches.

Linnell was thirty, and at thirty these symptoms come stronger than in early youth. It is then that a man begins to know himself a man: it is then that he begins to recognise and appraise his own effect upon the hearts of women.

He liked Psyche—liked her immensely; but the really important question was this, Did Psyche like him? He knew enough about women, of course, by this time, to know that six or seven thousand a year will buy you outright the venal love of half the girls in a London ballroom. He knew that, and he didn't care to invest his money in the unprofitable purchase. The question was, Did Psyche really like him for himself, or could Psyche be made so to like him? He glanced down uneasily, as he sat in his own armchair in the inn room, at his lame leg, or the leg that he still insisted on considering as lame, and asked himself gravely many times over, Would Psyche take him, limp and all included, without the dead make-weight of that hypothetical and unacknowledged fortune? If Psyche would, then well and good: it was an honour for any man to marry Haviland Dumaresq's daughter. But if Psyche wouldn't—— Ha, what a start! As he thought the words to himself, Linnell for the first time realized in his soul how deeply his life had already intertwined itself with Psyche's.

The dream was born but the day before yesterday; and yet even to-day to give it up would cost him a lasting pang of sorrow.

He had understood well what Haviland Dumaresq meant when he said that if he had to advise any young man or woman beginning life he would tell them to go the way of the world, and work for money, position, and power. The great philosopher was a father, after all: he was thinking of Psyche. And for that, Linnell could not really find it in his heart to blame him. The old man had led his own heroic life, in his own heroic self-denying way, for a grand purpose: he had spent himself in

the service of thought and humanity. But when he looked at Psyche's beautiful young life—at that pink-and-white rosebud, just opening so sweetly and daintily to the air of heaven—he might well be forgiven for the natural wish to surround her with all possible comfort and luxury. A man may be a Stoic for himself if he likes, no doubt, but no good man can ever be a Stoic for those he loves best—for his wife or his daughter.

There the painter thoroughly sympathized with him. If he married Psyche it would be because he wished to make her happy: to give her all that money can give: to make life more beautiful and worthy and dear to her. For that, he would gladly fling away everything.

So Linnell could easily forgive the father if he wished Psyche, as the world says, 'to marry well'—to marry money—for, in plain prose, that was what it came to. He could forgive even Haviland Dumaresq himself for that vulgar thought. He could forgive Dumaresq—but not Psyche. If Psyche took him, she must take him for pure, pure love alone. She must never ask if he was rich or poor. She must never inquire into the details of his banking-book. She must fling herself upon him just because she loved him. He wanted, in his way, to do after the fashion of the Lord of Burleigh. He must be but a landscape-painter, and a village maiden she. On those terms alone would he consent to be loved. And on those terms, too, he said to himself, with a little thrill of delight, Haviland Dumaresq's daughter would be content to love him. If Psyche were made of other mould than that—if Psyche were swayed by vulgar ideals and base self-interest—if Psyche were incapable of devotion like her father's, or of love like his own—then Linnell for his part would have nothing to say to her. It was just because he felt sure something of Haviland Dumaresq's grand self-forgetfulness must run innate in his daughter's veins that the painter believed he could give up his life for her.

So he whispered to himself, as he lay awake that night and thought of Psyche. But at that very moment, at the Wren's Nest, a gray old man, erect and haughty still, but with that dreamy look in his eyes that Linnel

had noticed so keenly on their second meeting, stole on tiptoe into the room where his daughter slept, and regarding her long in a strange ecstasy of delight, candle in hand, murmured to himself in low, hazy tones: 'She *shall* be rich. She *shall* be happy. She shall have all she wants. She shall live the life I never lived. I see it. I feel it. I know it's coming.—A rich man shall love her. I feel it's coming.—Space swells around me. The walls grow bigger. The world grows wider. The music rings. How glorious it all looks in Psyche's palace! I shall make her happy. I shall guard her and watch over her. She shall never fling her life away, as I flung mine, for vain conceits, for empty shadows. I see the vision. I hear the music. It rings in my ears. It tells me she shall be happy.'

If a medical man could have looked at the great philosopher's eyes just then, he would have needed but little experience to tell you that the silver-coated pellet Haviland Dumaresq had swallowed to calm his nerves the evening before was pure opium. It was thus that nature revenged herself at last for long years of excessive toil and terrible privation.

Next day Psyche was to begin her sittings in the Arab costume. Linnell was up early, and opened his letters from London at the breakfast-table. Among them was one from his agent in town, giving a list of all libraries and institutions in the English-speaking world to which copies of Haviland Dumaresq's great work could be sent by an ardent admirer. The number a little surprised himself: his agent had hunted up two hundred and seventy distinct recipients. The complete series of the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy' was published at three guineas a set: the total would amount, therefore, to £850 10s. He totted up the number on the back of an envelope, and drew a long breath. That was a big sum—much bigger than he expected; but it would make Dumaresq rich for many a long day to come. Eight hundred and fifty was nothing to him. He took his cheque-book from his portmanteau, and filled in a cheque for that amount off-hand. Then he wrote a short note of instruction to his agent; packed up his easel for the

morning's work; dropped letter and cheque in the post-box as he passed, and presented himself betimes at the Wren's Nest, with an approving conscience, to fulfil his engagement.

He was glad to think he had done so much to make Psyche and her father both happy. And he was glad, too, in a certain indefinite, half-conscious way, that he'd planned it first for Haviland Dumaresq's own sake, before he even knew of Psyche's existence. Love of philosophy, not love of a girl, had given him the earliest impulse to do that kind and generous action.

It was a happy morning, indeed, for both the young people. Linnell had to pose and drape Psyche, with Geraldine Maitland's friendly assistance—for Geraldine had come round to bring the Arab dress, and remained to perform propriety for the occasion. 'Papa wouldn't come down this morning,' Psyche said, blushing: 'he had one of his very bad headaches to-day. She noticed last night that papa's eyes had that strange far-away, dreamy look about them which, she always observed, was followed soon by a racking headache. He was dreadfully depressed when he got well, too: he'd have a terrible fit of depression to-morrow, she was afraid.' Linnell was politely sorry to hear that; yet too secretly glad at the proximate success of his own device to feel that the depression could be very permanent. It was such an impersonal way of doing a man a benefit—increasing the sale of his book so largely. It would all go in with the yearly account, no doubt; and unless Dumaresq inquired very closely into the sales, he would never even find out the real reason of this apparent leap into sudden popularity. He would only know in a vague and general way that a great many more of his books had been sold this year than in any previous year since their first publication.

'There, that'll do exactly,' he said at last, posing Psyche's head, with a soft silky *haik* thrown lightly across it, a little on one side towards her left shoulder. 'Don't you think so, Miss Maitland? It'll do so. That's absolute perfection. Now you can laugh and talk as much as you like, you know, Miss Dumaresq. Don't

suppose it's the same as having your photograph taken. What a painter wants above all is the natural expression. The more you're yourself the more beautiful and graceful the picture will be, of course.'

'What a pretty compliment!' Geraldine Maitland murmured archly. 'You never speak that way to *me*, Mr. Linnell.'

The painter looked down and laughed awkwardly. 'But I've never painted *you*, you know, Miss Maitland,' he answered, rather restrained. 'When I do, I'll prepare a whole quiverful of compliments ready for use beforehand.'

'I understand. Precisely so. But with Psyche, you see, they well out naturally.'

Psyche blushed and smiled at once. 'Don't talk such nonsense, Geraldine,' she said with a bashful air. 'Is this right now, Mr. Linnell, please? Geraldine sets me out of pose by talking.'

Linnell looked up from his easel admiringly. 'Go on making her blush like that as long as you please, Miss Maitland,' he said with a smile, as he outlined her delicate face on his canvas. 'That's just how I want it. Nothing could be more perfect. My Fatma or Mouni's supposed to be caught in the very act of falling in love for the first time. I mean to call it "The Dawn of Love," in fact, and you must try to throw yourself as fully as possible into the spirit of the character, you see, Miss Dumaresq.'

If Linnell had wished to make her blush, indeed, nothing he could have said would have succeeded better. The poor girl flushed so crimson at once from chin to forehead that Linnell took pity upon her, and strove at once to turn the current of the conversation. He shifted the subject to Dumaresq and his work, the adherents his system was gaining on the Continent, and his own profound belief in its ultimate triumph. 'All great things grow slowly,' he said, as he worked away at the dainty curve of those quivering nostrils. 'The Newtonian gravitation was disbelieved for half a century, and Lamarck went blind and poor to his grave without finding one adherent for his evolutionary theories.'

'Papa has many,' Psyche said simply, 'and those, too, among the greatest and most famous of the time. Even among the people we see here at Petherton, I can always measure their intellect at first sight by observing in what sort of respect they hold my father.'

'Then my intelligence must be of a very high order,' Linnell went on, laughing, 'for I believe nobody on earth ranks Haviland Dumaresq higher than I do. To me he seems far and away the greatest thinker I've ever met or seen or read about.'

'To me, too,' Psyche answered quietly.

The reply startled him by its simple directness. It was so strange that a girl of Psyche's age should have any opinion at all of her own upon such a subject; stranger still that she should venture to express it to another so plainly and openly. There was something of Haviland Dumaresq's own straightforward impersonal truthfulness in this frank avowal of supreme belief on Psyche's part in her father's greatness. Linnell liked her all the better for her frank confidence. 'I'm glad to hear you say so,' he said, 'for one knows that great men are often so much misjudged by their own family. No man, we know, is a hero to his valet. Let him be the profoundest philosopher that ever breathed on earth, and he's oftenest looked upon as Only Papa by his own daughters. But I'm glad to know, too, that the faith is spreading. How many copies, now, have you any idea, are usually sold of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy?"'

'Oh, not more than ten or twelve a year,' Psyche answered carelessly, rearranging the drapery upon her shining shoulder.

Linnell started.

'Only ten or twelve a year!' he cried, astonished. 'You don't mean to tell me that's really the case? You must be mistaken! I can't believe it. Only ten or twelve copies a year of the greatest work set forth by any thinker of the present century!'

'Yes,' Psyche answered, in that quiet, resigned, matter-of-fact way she had inherited from her father. 'You see, in England, people read it at the libraries; the great sale's all abroad, papa says, and the book's been

translated into all European and Asiatic languages, so people for the most part buy the translations, which practically bring in next to nothing. Then the Americans, of course, who read it so much, read it all in pirated editions. They once sent papa a hundred pounds as compensation; but papa sent the cheque back again at once. He said he wouldn't accept it as a present and a favour from people who ought to pay tenfold as a simple act of natural justice.'

But I suppose whatever are sold now are all clear profit?' Linnell asked tentatively, with many misgivings, lest he should ask too much, and let out beforehand the secret of this enormous bound into supposed popularity.

'Well, yes,' Psyche answered with some little hesitation. 'I believe they are. I've heard papa say Macmurdo and White have long since covered all expenses, and that every copy sold now is money in pocket.'

Linnell breathed freely once more. Then the £850 10s., for which he had sent off his cheque that morning to his agent, would be all clear gain to the poor needy Dumaresq. His brush worked on upon the canvas with unusual vigour. He had never had such a sitter in his life before; he had never felt he was doing himself such justice, nor experienced such a supreme internal consciousness of having been useful to others in his generation.

When the head of the great publishing house of Macmurdo and White received a cheque for £850 10s., and an order for two hundred and seventy complete sets of 'Dumaresq's Encyclopædic' (as the trade in its recognised shorthand calls it), he raised his eyebrows, sucked in his cheeks, and tapped with his forefinger on the desk of the counting-house.

'It's coming, White,' he said, enchanted. 'I told you it was coming. I knew it was bound to come sooner or later. "Dumaresq's Encyclopædic's" certain to sell in the long run. There's an order here outright for two hundred and seventy of 'em. Two hundred and seventy's a very big lot. See how many we have ready in cloth, will you, and order the rest to be bound at once from

the quires to order. I'm devilish glad we bought the copyright of that book outright from the man—and for a mere song, too. It's paid expenses, I see, these three years back: so that's eight hundred and fifty pounds clear profit for the house on a small transaction.'

For when Psyche Dumaresq mentioned the casual fact that every copy sold of her father's great work was 'money in pocket,' she omitted to add the trifling detail that the pocket in question was Messrs. Macmurdo and White's, worshipful publishers', and not the author's, Haviland Dumaresq's. To anyone who lived in the world of books, indeed, that point would have been the first and most natural to make inquiries about: but the painter, in his eagerness to do a good deed, had never even so much as thought of the possibility that the copyright might not be the author's. All that Linnell had actually accomplished, in fact, by his generous intention was simply to put eight hundred guineas or so into the bursting till of a flourishing firm of London publishers.

'And look here, White,' Mr. Macmurdo called out as his partner left the room to fulfil the order: 'that poor devil Dumaresq never made much out of the book for his pains. Let's send the man a twenty-pound note as a present!'

Most English publishers would have made it a hundred; and no other trade on earth would have made it anything. But Macmurdo and White are proverbially close-fisted; and the twenty-pound note from that amiable firm was all Haviland Dumaresq ever got out of Charles Linnell's well-meant attempt to benefit the great philosopher. When it arrived at the Wren's Nest, Dumaresq turned to Psyche with a smile and said: 'I may keep that honestly. They must have made it well out of me or they wouldn't send it. Though of course I've no right in the world to a penny. But it's dropped in at the very nick of time. It'll cover the cost of that young man's picture.'

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE UNITED SERVICE.

When General Maitland returned a week later from the Métropole Hotel to High Ash, Petherton, it was with conscious rectitude and the sense of a duty performed that he remarked to his wife:

'Well, Maria, I went to the club, and I've found out all about that painter fellow.'

As a matter of fact, indeed, it was with no small persistence that that gallant soldier had prosecuted his inquiries in London town into the Linnell pedigree.

In the smoking-room of the Senior United Service Club, a few days after his arrival in town, he had chanced to light upon Sir Austen Linnell, the supposed cousin of their Algerian acquaintance. Sir Austen, a cold and reserved man, was very full at the moment of his preparations for going to Egypt, to join Gordon at Khartoum by special invitation. Those were the days of the forlorn hope, while communications up the Nile were yet clear, before the Mahdi's troops had begun to invest the doomed city; and Sir Austen had obtained leave, he said, to accept a call from Gordon himself to form one of his staff in the capital of the threatened, but still unconquered, Soudan. This was the very moment for inquiring, clearly. General Maitland fastened himself upon Sir Austen with avidity, and listened patiently to all his details of the outfit he ought to take for the Upper Nile journey, and of the relative advantages of the rival routes viâ Assouan or Suakim to the heart of Africa. At last Sir Austen paused a little in his narrative; and the General, thinking an appropriate moment had now arrived, managed to remark casually:

'By the way, Linnell, we've a namesake of yours stopping down at Petherton just at present. I wonder whether he and you are any relations.'

Sir Austen's brow gathered slightly.

'A painter fellow?' he asked with a contemptuous intonation.

'Well, he certainly paints,' the General answered, with some faint undercurrent of asperity in his tone, for he didn't quite care to hear a possible son-in-law of the Maitlands of High Ash thus cavalierly described; 'but I'm not sure whether he's a regular artist or only an amateur. I think he paints for amusement chiefly. He seems to be coiny. Do you know anything of him?'

'I've heard of him,' Sir Austen replied curtly, perusing the ceiling.

'His name's Austen Linnell too, by the way,' the General went on with bland suggestiveness. 'Charles Austen Linnell, he calls himself. He must belong to your family, I fancy.'

Sir Austen raised his shoulders almost imperceptibly.

'A' Stuarts are na sib to the king,' he answered oracularly, with the air of a man who desires to close, offhand, an unseasonable discussion. And he tapped the table as he spoke with one impatient forefinger.

But General Maitland, once fairly on the scent, was not thus to be lightly put down. He kept his point well in view, and he meant to make for it, with soldierly instinct, in spite of all obstacles.

'The man has money,' he said, eyeing Sir Austen close and sharp. 'He's a gentleman, you know, and very well educated. He was at Christ Church, I imagine, and he travels in Africa.'

'I dare say he has money,' Sir Austen retorted with a certain show of unwonted petulance, taking up a copy of *Vanity Fair* from the table, and pretending to be vastly interested in the cartoon. 'And I dare say he travels in Africa also. A great many fellows have money nowadays. Some of them make it out of cats'-meat sausages. For my own part, I think a sort of gentlemanly indigence is more of a credential to good society at the present day than any amount of unaccountable money. I know I can never raise any cash myself, however much I want it. Land in Rutland's a drug in the market, to be had for the asking. If your friend wants to rent an ancestral estate, now, on easy terms, on the strength of a singular coincidence in our Christian and surnames, I shall be happy to meet him through my agent any day, with a

most equitable arrangement for taking Thorpe Manor. If he chose to live in the house while I'm away in Africa (where those confounded Jews can't get at me anyhow), he might make a great deal of social capita' in the county out of the double-barrelled resemblance, and perhaps marry into some good family, which I suppose is the height of the fellow's ambition.' And Sir Austen, laying down the paper once more, and puffing away most vigorously at his cigar, strode off with long strides, and without further explanation vouchsafed, to the secure retreat of the club billiard-room.

His reticence roused General Maitland's curiosity to almost boiling-point.

'A' Stuarts are na sib to the king,' Sir Austen had said; but he had never explicitly denied the relationship. Who could this painter Linnell really be, then; and why should the putative head of his house speak with so evident a mixture of dislike and envy about his supposed fortune? The General was puzzled. He looked around him with a comical air of utter despair, and roped his gray moustache to right and left in sore perplexity.

As he gazed round the room, airing his doubts visibly, his eyes chanced to fall upon old Admiral Rolt, seated on a divan in the far corner, and looking up from his perusal of the *Piccadilly Gazette* with a curious twinkle about his small, fat pig's-eyes. General Maitland nodded a cursory recognition; and the Admiral, laying down his paper nothing loath, in the midst of a brilliant and vehement leader on the supineness of the service and the wickedness of the Administration, waddled across the room on his short fat legs slowly to meet him.

'You were asking Linnell about that Yankee cousin of his,' he said with his oily, gossipy smile—for the Admiral is the licensed tattle-monger of the Senior United Service. 'Well, if you care to hear it, I know that story well from beginning to end. Seen it all through from the day it was launched. Met my old shipmate, the painter fellow's father, in Boston long ago, when I was cruising about on the North American Station, and gave him a lift once to Halifax in the old wooden *Bellerophon*, the one that was broken up after

Bosanquet's haul-down, you recollect, when I got my promotion. Knew all his people in Rutland, too, from the time I was a baby; and the lady as well: dear me, dear me, she *was* a clever one! Best hand at a page or a saucy chambermaid I ever saw in my born days; and as full of cunning as Canton is of Chinamen.'

'Then they *are* related?' the General asked cautiously.

'Related! Who? Linnell and the painter? My dear sir, I believe you. First-cousins, that's all: own brother's sons: and unless Sir Austen has a boy of his own before he dies, you take my word for it, that lame painter man's the heir to the baronetcy.'

'You don't mean to say so!' the General cried, surprised.

'Yes, I do, though. That's it. You may take my word for it. Very few people nowadays know anything about the story—blown over long ago, as things do blow over: and Linnell himself—Sir Austen, I mean—won't for a moment so much as acknowledge the relationship. It's not in the Peerage. Linnell don't allow it to be put in—he disclaims the connection: and the lame fellow's a sight too proud and too quixotic to meddle with the family dirty linen. He doesn't want to have the whole bundle dragged to light, and Sir Austen blackguarding his father and mother in every house in all London. But if ever Sir Austen dies, you mark my words, the painter fellow 'll come into Thorpe Manor as sure as my name's John Antony Rolt, sir. It's strictly entailed: property follows the baronetcy in tail male. Linnell's done his very best to break the entail, to my certain knowledge, in order to cut off this Yankee cousin: but it's no go: the law can't manage it. The lame man'll follow him as master at Thorpe to a dead certainty, unless Lady Linnell presents him with an heir to the title beforehand—which isn't likely, seeing that they've been over five years married.'

'But why does Linnell object to acknowledging him?' the General asked curiously.

'Well, it's a precious long story,' the old sailor answered, button-holing his willing listener with great joy—a willing listener was a godsend to the Admiral: 'but I'll tell you

all about it in strict confidence, as I know the ins and outs of the whole question from the very beginning. It seems Sir Austen Linnell the elder—you remember him?—the thin old fellow with the cracked voice who was once in the F. O., worse luck! and got us into that precious nasty mess with the Siamese about the Bangkok bombardment—well, that Sir Austen, the present man's father, had a brother Charles, a harum-scarum creature with a handsome face and a wild eye, who was a mess-mate of mine as midshipman on board the *Cockatrice*. The *Cockatrice* one time was stationed at Plymouth, and there we all fell in with an awfully pretty dancing-girl—one Sally Withers her real name was, I believe, in private circles; but they called her at the theatre, if you please, Miss Violet Fitzgerald. So what must Charlie Linnell and this girl Sally do, by George! but get very thick indeed with one another: so thick at last that there was a jolly row over it, and Sir Austen the eldest, who was then living—not the F. O. man, you understand, but his father again, the Peninsular hero, who died afterwards of the cholera in India—came down to Plymouth and broke the whole thing completely up. He carried off Charlie in disgrace to town, dismissed Miss Sally Violet Fitzgerald to her own profession, spirited her away with her troupe to Australia, and made poor Charlie resign his commission, which he was permitted to do at head-quarters on easy terms, to prevent some scandal about a forged leave of absence or something from the Port Admiral.'

'But then this man Linnell the painter isn't——'

'Just you wait and hear. That ain't by any means the end of the story. An old sailor must take his own time to spin his yarn. Well, Charlie, he settled down to a respectable life in town, and was pitchforked by his father into a jolly good berth in the backstairs of the War Office, and grew religious, and forswore the theatre, and took to getting up penny readings, and altogether astonished his friends and acquaintances by developing into a most exemplary member of society. Quite an evolution, as folks say nowadays. Some of us had our doubts about the change, of course, who'd known Charlie in the noisy

old days on board the *Cockatrice:* but, bless your heart, we said nothing: we waited to see what 'ud be the end of it all. In time, if you please, Master Charlie announces, to our great surprise, he's going to be married—to a second-cousin of his, twice removed, the daughter of a Dean too, an excellent match, down at Melbury Cathedral. So in due course the marriage comes off, the Dean officiating, and everybody goes into raptures over the bride, and says how wonderfully Charlie has quieted down, and what an excellent man lay hid so long under his brass buttons and his midshipman's uniform. It was "West African Mission Meeting; Charles Linnell, Esquire, will take the chair at eight precisely." It was "Melbury Soup Kitchen; Charles Linnell, Esquire, Ten Guineas." It was "Loamshire Auxiliary, Charles Linnell, Esquire, President and Treasurer." You never in your life saw such a smooth-faced, clean-shaven, philanthropic, methodistical, mealy-mouthed gentleman. He was the very moral of a blameless ratepayer. But under it all, he was always Charlie.'

'And the painter, I suppose, is a son of this man and the Dean's daughter?' General Maitland interposed, anxious to get at the pith of the long-winded story.

'Don't you believe it,' the Admiral answered energetically, with a small fat wink. 'The Dean's daughter had one nice little boy, to be sure, whom the present Sir Austen still acknowledges as a sort of cousin: but that's neither here nor there, I tell you: he's a parson in Northumberland now, the Dean's grandson, and nothing at all to do with this present history. About three months after that boy was born, however, what should happen but a party of strolling players comes round to Melbury, where Charlie happened to be stopping at the time with his papa-in-law, the Dean, and accepting hospitality from his revered and right reverend friend, the Bishop. Well, the Dean, who was a good sort of body in his way, was all for converting the actors and actresses; so he invited them in the lump from their penny gaff to a meeting at the Deanery, Charles Linnell, Esquire, the eminent philanthropist, to deliver a nice little fatherly address to them. Charlie made them a

most affecting speech, and everything went off as well as could be expected till the very last moment, when, just as they'd finished their weak tea and penny buns, and Charlie was moving away with great dignity from the chair, which he'd filled so beautifully, what should happen but a bold, good-looking player woman, whom he hadn't noticed in a dark corner, gave him a dig in the ribs, and called out to him in a fine broad Irish brogue—she'd played some Irish part when Charlie was stationed on the *Cockatrice* at Plymouth—"Och, Charlie, ohone, sure an' it's yourself's the hoary old hypocrite! Don't ye know me, thin, for your wedded wife, Mistress Linnell, me darlin', fresh back from Australia?" And true enough that's just what she was, as it turned out afterwards: for Charlie'd married Miss Sally Violet quite regularly at Plymouth half a dozen years before.'

'What, bigamy!' the General cried in almost mute surprise.

'Ah, bigamy, if you choose to put an ugly name to it: that's just about the long and short of it. But anyhow, there was a regular burst-up that very evening. In twenty-four hours Charlie had disappeared: the eminent philanthropic gentleman had ceased to exist. Miss Sally Violet, who *was* a clever one, and no mistake, and as handsome a woman as ever I set eyes upon, bar none, had got him straight under her pretty little thumb again: he was just fascinated, clean taken by surprise; and next week, it was all about over every club in London that Charlie Linnell had eloped with her from Liverpool for somewhere in America, and the Dean's daughter was once more a spinster.'

'What a painful surprise!' the General said constrainedly.

'Painful? You may say so. Poor Mrs. Linnell the Second, the Dean's daughter, nearly cried her wretched little black eyes out. But the family stuck by her like bricks, I must say. Sir Austen the eldest declared he'd never acknowledge Mrs. Linnell the First as one of the family, and he left what he could to Mrs. Linnell the Second and her poor little baby, the parson in Northumberland. Meanwhile, Charlie'd gone off on his own

hook to Boston, you see, with five thousand pounds, saved from the wreck, in his waistcoat pocket, unable to come to England again, of course, as long as he lived, for fear Mr. Dean should prosecute him for bigamy; but with that clever little wife of his, the Sally Violet creature, ready to make his fortune for him over again in America. She hadn't been there but a year and a day, as the old song says, when this new painter baby appears upon the scene, the legitimate heir to the Linnells of Thorpe Manor. Well, clever little Mrs. Sally Violet, she says, says she to Charlie: "Charlie, my boy," says she, "you must make money for the precious baby." "How?" says Charlie. "A pill," says Sally. "But what the dickens do I know about pills, my dear?" says Charlie, flabbergasted. "What's that got to do with the question, stupid?" says sharp Mrs. Sally. "Advertise, advertise, advertise, is the motto! Nothing can be done in this world without advertisements." So she took Charlie's five thousand into her own hands and advertised like winking, all over the shop, till you couldn't go up the White Mountain peak without seeing in letters as big as yourself on every rock, "Use Linnell's Instantaneous Lion Liver Pills." Podophyllin and rhubarb did all the rest, and Charlie died a mild sort of a millionaire at last in a big house in Beacon Street, Boston. This fellow with the game leg inherited the lot—the ballet-girl having predeceased him in the odour of sanctity—but I understand he made over a moiety of the fortune to his half-brother, the parson in Northumberland, Mr. Dean's grandson. He said his father's son was his father's son, acknowledged or unacknowledged, and he, for his part, would never do another the cruel wrong which the rest of the world would be glad enough to do to himself if they had the opportunity.'

'That was honourable of him, at any rate,' the General said dryly.

'Honourable of him? Well, yes, I grant you that; honourable, of course, but confoundedly quixotic. The fellow's all full of this sentimental nonsense, though. He won't lay claim to the heirship to the baronetcy in the Peerage, it seems, because the other son's well known

in England, and he won't brand his own half-brother with bastardy, he says, whatever comes of it. His own half-brother, by the way, the parson in Northumberland, though he owes his fortune to him, hates him like poison, and would brand *him* with bastardy or anything else as soon as look at him. And then he's got ridiculous ideas about his money generally: doesn't feel sure the paternal pills ever did any good in the world to anybody to speak of, though I believe they're harmless, quite harmless, and I used to take them myself for years on the North American Station, where one needs such things in the hot season. But this young fellow has doubts as to their efficacy after all, it seems, and is sensitive about the way his money was made: says he holds it in trust for humanity, or some such high-falutin, new-fangled nonsense, and would like to earn his living honestly if he could by his own exertions. Charlie sent him over to be educated at Oxford (though of course he couldn't come himself), as he wanted to make an English gentleman of him. He spends the best part of his fortune in charity, I believe, encouraging people he thinks should be encouraged, and pensioning off everybody who suffered in any way, however remotely, by his father's doings. He's quite quixotic, in fact—quite quixotic.'

'If he thinks it's right,' the General said quietly—for he believed in duty, like an old-fashioned soldier, and was not ashamed to deal in moral platitudes, 'he ought to stick to it. But,' he added after a short pause, 'if he were to marry any nice girl anywhere, I expect he'd turn out much like all the rest of us.'

'Eh, what's that?' the Admiral cried sharply, peering out of his fat little black eyes like a wide-awake hedgehog. 'Marry a nice girl? Ah, yes, I dare say—if any nice girl can only manage to catch him. But the man's as full of fads and fancies as a schoolgirl. Suspicious, suspicious, suspicious of everybody. Thinks people look down upon him because he's lame. Thinks they look down upon him because his mother was only a ballet-girl. Thinks they look down upon him because his father ran away to America. Thinks they look down upon him because the Linnells of Thorpe Manor won't

acknowledge him. Thinks they look down upon him because his money was made out of pills. Thinks they look down upon him for what he is and for what he isn't, for what they think him and what they don't think him. And all the time, mind you, knows his own worth, and doesn't mean to be caught for nothing: has as keen an idea of the value of his money, as perfect a sense of how much the world runs after seven thousand a year, and as good a notion of his own position as heir-presumptive to an old English baronetcy, as any other man in the three kingdoms. But the Linnells were always unaccountable people—most odd mixtures: and even Charlie, in spite of his high jinks and his bare-faced hypocrisy, was chock-full of all sorts of high-flown notions. They say he loved the ballet-girl right through, like a perfect fool, and was only persuaded to marry the Dean's daughter at last by his father swearing she was dead and buried long ago at Plymouth. When I met him at Boston, years after, in the liver-pill business, there he was, billing and cooing with Miss Sally Violet as fondly as ever, and as madly devoted to this lame boy of theirs as if his mother had been a Duchess's daughter.'

And later in the day, when General Maitland had retired to his own room at the Métropole, the Admiral was button-holing every other flag-officer in the whole club, and remarking, with his little pig's-eyes as wide open as the lids would permit: 'I say, So-and-so, have you heard the latest thing out in society? Maitland's girl's trying to catch that Yankee artist fellow, Linnell's cousin!'

CHAPTER VIII.

GETTING ON.

It must be frankly confessed that Linnell took an unconscionably long time in painting in the figure of that bewitching Arab girl in the foreground of his graceful Algerian picture. He arranged and rearranged the drapery and the pose till Psyche herself was fairly astonished at the exacting requirements of high art.

Perhaps he had reasons of his own for being in no hurry over his self-imposed task: at any rate, he loitered lovingly over every touch and every detail, and filled in the minutest points of the flesh-tints with even more than his customary conscientious minuteness. Psyche, too, for her part, seemed to like very well her novel trade of artist's model.

'Are you tired yet?' Linnell asked her more than once, as they sat in the gloom of the bare little dining-room at the Wren's Nest together; and Psyche answered always with a smile of half-childish surprise: 'Oh dear no, Mr. Linnell—not the least in the world. I could sit like this and be painted for ever.'

To say the truth, she had never before known she was so beautiful. Linnell could idealize female heads against any man; and Psyche's pretty head came out on his canvas so glorified by the halo of first love that she hardly recognised her own counterfeit presentment.

'Do you always take so much pains with your sitters?' she asked once, as the painter paused and regarded attentively some shade of expression on her lips and eyebrows.

And Linnell smiled a broad smile as he answered truthfully: 'Not unless I think my sitter very well worth it.'

'And in the East, who do you get to sit for you?' Psyche asked, looking up at him with those big liquid eyes of hers.

'Nobody so well worth painting as you,' the artist answered with a faint touch of his brush on the eye in the picture—he had just managed to catch the very light he wanted in it. 'Dancing-girls mostly, who sit for money, or Nubians sometimes, who don't veil their features. But in Lower Egypt and in Algiers, of course, you can't get most of the respectable women to show you their faces at all for love or money.'

Psyche hesitated for a moment; then she said timidly: 'Nobody has ever painted papa. Don't you think some day there ought to be a portrait of him?'

Linnell started.

'Do you mean to say,' he cried, with a fresh burst of

surprise, 'there's no portrait of him at all anywhere in existence?'

'Not even a photograph,' Psyche answered with a faint shake of her pretty head. 'He won't be taken. He doesn't like it. He says a world that won't read his books can't be very anxious to look at his outer features. But I think there ought to be a portrait painted of him somewhere, for all that. I look to the future. In after-ages, surely, people will like to know what so great a man as papa looked like.'

'Then you have no fear for his fame?' Linnell asked, half smiling.

'None at all,' Psyche answered with quiet dignity. 'Of course, Mr. Linnell, I don't pretend to understand his philosophy and all that sort of thing; but I don't think I should be worthy to be my father's daughter if I didn't see that, in spite of the world's neglect and want of appreciation, a man with so grand a character as papa must let his soul go out in books which can never be forgotten.'

'I don't think you would,' Linnell murmured very low. 'And one of the things I like best about you, Psyche, is that you appreciate your father so thoroughly. It shows, as you say, you're not unworthy to be so great a man's daughter.'

He had never called her Psyche before, but he called her so now quite simply and unaffectedly; and Psyche, though it brought the warm blood tingling into her cheek, took no overt notice of the bold breach of conventional etiquette. She preferred that Linnell should call her so, unasked, rather than formally ask for leave to use the more familiar form in addressing her.

'Papa would make a splendid portrait, too,' she said wistfully, after a moment's pause.

'He would,' Linnell assented. 'I never in my life saw a nobler head. If only somebody could be got somewhere who was good enough to do it.'

'Wouldn't you care to try?' Psyche asked with an outburst.

Linnell hesitated.

'It isn't my line,' he said. 'I can manage grace and

delicate beauty, I know, but not that rugged masculine grandeur. I'm afraid I should fail to do my sitter justice.'

'Oh, I don't think so at all,' Psyche cried with some warmth. 'You appreciate papa. You admire him. You understand him. You recognise the meaning of the lines in his face. I think, myself, nobody could do it as well as you could.' And she looked up at him almost pleadingly.

'You really mean it?' Linnell exclaimed, brightening up. She was but an inexperienced country girl, yet her opinion of his art gave him more profound self-confidence than Sydney Colvin's or Comyns Carr's could possibly have done. He needed encouragement and the frank note of youthful certainty. No art critic so cocksure as a girl in her teens. 'If you think I could do it,' he went on after a pause, still working hard at the light in the left eye, 'I should be proud to try my inexperienced hand at it. I should go down to posterity, in that case, if for nothing else, at least as the painter of the only genuine and authentic portrait of Haviland Dumaresq.'

'You share my enthusiasm,' Psyche said with a smile.

'I do,' the painter answered, looking over at her intently. 'And, indeed, I can sympathize with your enthusiasm doubly. In the first place, I admire your father immensely; and in the second place'—he paused for a moment, then he added reverently—'I had a mother myself once. Nothing that anybody could ever have said would have seemed to me too much to say about my dear mother.'

'Did you ever paint *her ?*' Psyche asked, with a quietly sympathetic tinge in her voice.

Linnell shook his head.

'Oh no,' he said. 'She died before I was old enough to paint at all. But,' he added after a pause, in his most hesitating tone, 'I've a little miniature of her here, if you'd like to see it.'

'I should like it very much,' Psyche said softly. Nothings! nothings! yet, oh, how full of meaning when sweet seventeen says them, with pursed-up lips and blushing cheeks, to admiring thirty.

The painter put his hand inside the breast of his coat and drew out a miniature in a small gold frame, hung round his neck by a black silk ribbon. He handed it to Psyche. The girl gazed close at it long and hard. It was the portrait of a graceful, gracious, gentle old lady, her smooth white hair surmounted by a dainty lace head-dress, and her soft eyes, so like Linnell's own, instinct with a kindly care and sweetness. Yet there was power, too, rare intellectual power, in the ample dome of that tall white forehead; and strength of will, most unlike her son's, stood confessed in the firm chin and the marked contour of the old lady's cheeks. It must surely have been from 'Charlie'—that scapegrace 'Charlie'—that Linnell inherited the weaker half of his nature: in the mother's traits, as set forth by the miniature, there showed no passing line of mental or moral weakness.

'She must have been a very great lady indeed,' Psyche cried, looking close at it.

'Oh no; not at all. She was only a singer—a public singer,' Linnell answered truthfully. 'But she sang as I never heard any other woman sing in all my days; and she lived a life of pure unselfishness.'

'Tell me about her,' Psyche said simply.

Her pretty sympathy touched the painter's sensitive nature to the core. His eyes brimmed full, and his hand trembled on the lashes of the face in the picture, but he pretended to go on with it still unabashed.

'I can't tell you much,' he said, trying hard to conceal his emotion from his sitter; 'but I can tell you a little. She was a grand soul. I owe to her whatever there may be of good, if any, within me.'

'An American, I suppose?' Psyche went on musingly, as she read the name and date in the corner, 'Boston, 1870.'

'No, not an American; thank heaven! not that—a Devonshire girl: true Briton to the bone. She was proud of Devonshire, and she loved it always. But she went away to America with my father of her own accord in her effort to redress a great wrong—a great wrong my father had unwittingly been forced, by the cruelty and treachery of others, into inflicting unawares on an inno-

cent woman—a woman who hated her, and for whom she would willingly have sacrificed everything. I can't tell you the whole story—at least, not now. Perhaps——' And he paused. Then he added more slowly: 'No, no; no, never. But I can tell you this much in general terms: my father had been deceived by *his* father—a wicked old man, my mother said, and my mother was a woman to be believed implicitly—my father had been deceived by a terrible lie into inflicting this cruel and irreparable wrong upon that other woman and a helpless child of hers. My mother, who already had suffered bitterly at his hands—for my father was a very weak man, though kind and well-meaning—my mother found it out, and determined to make what reparation was possible to her for that irretrievable evil. She never thought of herself. She never even vindicated her own position. She stole away to America, and was as if she were dead; there she toiled and slaved, and built up a livelihood for us in a strange way, and wished that half of all she had earned should belong in the end to that other woman and her innocent child; the woman that hated her. Through good report and evil report she worked on still; she kept my father straight, as no other woman could ever have kept him; she brought me up tenderly and well; and when she died, she left it to me as a sacred legacy to undo as far as in me lay the evil my grandfather and father had wrought between them: one by his wickedness, the other by his weakness. I don't suppose you can understand altogether what I mean; but I dare say you can understand enough to know why I loved and revered and adored my mother.'

'I can understand all, I think,' Psyche murmured low; 'and I don't know why I should be afraid to say so.' With any other woman, the avowal might have sounded unwomanly; with Psyche, girt round in her perfect innocence, it sounded but the natural and simple voice of human sympathy.

Events take their colour from the mind that sees them. There are no such things as facts; there are only impressions. The story old Admiral Rolt had bluntly blurted out at the Senior United Service to General

Maitland was the self-same story that Linnell, in his delicate, obscure half-hints, had faintly shadowed forth that day to Psyche; only the mode of regarding the events differed. Between the two, each mind must make its choice for itself. To the pure all things are pure; and to Admiral Rolt the singer of beautiful songs, and the mother that Linnell so loved and revered, envisaged herself only as a common music-hall ballet-girl. How far the scene at the Deanery and the Irish brogue were embellishments of the Admiral's own fertile genius, nobody now living could probably say. On the Admiral's tongue no story lost for want of amplification. Perhaps the truth lay somewhere between the two extremes; but Linnell's was at least the nobler version, and bespoke the nobler mind at the back of it.

They paused for a moment or two in utter silence. Then Linnell spoke again.

'Why do I make you the confidante of this little family episode?' he asked dreamily.

'I suppose,' Psyche answered, looking up at him with something of her father's bold, open look, 'because you knew you were sure of finding friendly sympathy.'

Their eyes met, and then fell suddenly. A strange tremor ran through Linnell's nerves. Was this indeed in very truth that woman who could love him for his own soul, apart from filthy lucre and everything else of the earth, earthy?

He looked up again, and hasting to change the conversation, asked of a sudden:

'How can I get your father to sit for me, I wonder?'

He was afraid to trust his own heart any further.

Psyche's eyes came back from infinity with a start.

'Oh, he'd never *sit!*' she cried. 'You can't do it that way. We must make up some plan to let you see him while you pretend to be painting something else, and he doesn't suspect it. You must get your studies for it while he knows nothing about it.'

'He might come in here while I paint you,' Linnell suggested with faint indecision, 'and then I could put one canvas behind another.'

A slight cloud came over Psyche's brow. It was so

much nicer to be painted *tête-à-tête* with only an occasional discreet irruption from Geraldine Maitland, who sat for the most part reading French novels on the tiny grass plot outside the open window.

'I think,' she said, after a slight pause, 'we might manage to concoct some better plot with Geraldine.'

There's nothing on earth to bind two young people together at a critical stage like concocting a plot. Before that surreptitious portrait of Haviland Dumaresq was half-finished—the old man being engaged in conversation outside by Geraldine, while Linnell within caught his features rapidly—the painter and Psyche felt quite at home with one another, and Psyche herself, though not prone to love affairs, began almost to suspect that Mr. Linnell must really and truly be thinking of proposing to her. And if he did—well, Psyche had her own ideas about her answer.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR STRATEGIC REASONS.

'GEORGE!' Mrs. Maitland remarked abruptly to her husband one evening, a few weeks later, as they sat by themselves, towards the small-hours, in the High Ash drawing-room, 'we must put our foot down without delay about Geraldine and this flighty girl of poor crazy old Dumaresq's.'

The General wavered. He was an old soldier, and he knew that when your commanding officer gives you a definite order, your duty is to obey, and not to ask for reasons or explanations. Where Geraldine was in question, however, discipline tottered, and the General ventured to temporize somewhat. He salved his conscience—his military conscience—by pretending not quite to understand his wife.

'Put our foot down how?' he managed to ask, prevaricating.

Mrs. Maitland, however, was not the sort of woman to stand prevarication.

'You know perfectly well what I mean,' she answered,

bridling up, 'so don't make-believe, George, you haven't observed it yourself. Don't look down at the carpet, like a fool, like that. You've seen as well as I have all this that's going on every day between them. Geraldine's behaved disgracefully—simply disgracefully. Knowing very well we had an eye ourselves upon that young man Linnell for her—a most eligible match, as you found out in London—instead of aiding and abetting us in our proper designs for her own happiness, what must she go and do but try her very hardest to fling him straight at the head of that bread-and-butter miss of poor crazy old Dumaresq's? And not only that, but, what's worse than all, she's helped on the affair, against her own hand, by actually going and playing gooseberry for them.'

'But what can we do?' the General remarked helplessly. 'A girl of Geraldine's spirit——'

His commanding officer crushed him ruthlessly.

'A girl of Geraldine's spirit!' she repeated with scorn. 'You call yourself a soldier! Why, George, I'm ashamed of you! Do you mean to tell me you're afraid of your own daughter? We must put our foot down. That's the long and the short of it!'

'How?' the General repeated once more with a shudder. It went against the grain with him to repress Geraldine.

'There are no two ways about it,' Mrs. Maitland went on, waving her closed fan like a marshal's baton before her. 'Look the thing plainly in the face, for once in your life, George. She *must* get married, and we *must* marry her. Last year she refused that rich young Yankee at Algiers. This year she's flung away her one chance of this well-to-do painter man. She's getting on, and wasting opportunities. There's Gordon's got into difficulties at Aldershot again: and Hugh, well, Hugh's failed for everything: and the boys at Winchester are coming on fast: and unless Geraldine marries, I'm sure I don't know what on earth we're ever to do for ourselves about her.'

'Well, what do you want me to *do*?' the General asked submissively. A soldier mayn't like it, but a soldier must always obey orders.

'Do? Why, speak to her plainly to-morrow,' Mrs. Maitland said with quiet emphasis. 'Tell her she mustn't go round any more wasting her time with these half-and-half Dumaresqs.'

'Dumaresq's a gentleman,' the General said stoutly.

'Was one, I dare say. But he's allowed himself to sink. And, anyhow, we can't let Geraldine aid and abet him in angling to catch this poor young Linnell for his daughter Psyche, or whatever else he calls the pink-and white young woman. It's a duty we owe to Mr. Linnell himself to protect him from such unblushing and disgraceful fortune-hunting. The girl's unfitted to be a rich man's wife. Depend upon it, it's always unwise to raise such people out of their natural sphere. You must speak to Geraldine yourself to-morrow, George, and speak firmly.'

The General winced. But he knew his place.

'Very well, Maria,' he answered without a murmur.

He would have saluted as he spoke had Mrs. Maitland and military duty compelled the performance of that additional courtesy.

So next morning after breakfast, with many misgivings, the General drew his daughter gently into his study, and begged her in set form to abstain in future, for her mother's sake, from visiting the Dumaresqs.

Geraldine heard him out in perfect composure.

'Is that all, papa?' she asked at last, as the General finished with trembling lips.

'That's all, Geraldine.'

He said it piteously.

'Very well, papa,' Geraldine answered, holding herself very tall and erect, with one hand on the table. 'I know what it means. Mamma asked you to speak to me about it. Mamma thinks Mr. Linnell might marry me. There mamma's mistaken. Mr. Linnell doesn't mean to ask me, and even if he did, I don't mean to take him.'

'You don't?'

'No, papa; I don't. So that's the long and short of it. I don't love him, and I won't marry him. He may be as rich as Crœsus, but I won't marry him. More

than that: he's in love with Psyche; and Psyche I think's in love with him. They want my help in the matter very badly; and unless somebody takes their future in hand and makes the running very easy for them, I'm afraid Mr. Linnell will never summon up courage to propose to Psyche. He's so dreadfully shy and reserved and nervous.'

'So you mean to go there still, my child, in spite of what I say to you?'

Geraldine hesitated.

'Father dear,' she cried, putting her graceful arms round the old man's neck tenderly, 'I love you very, very much: but I can't bear not to help poor dear lonely Psyche.'

The General's courage, which was all physical, oozed out like Bob Acres's at the palms of his hands. This was not being firm; but he couldn't help it. His daughter's attitude had his sincerest sympathy. The commanding officer might go and be hanged. Still, he temporized.

'Geraldine,' he said softly, bending her head to his, 'promise me at least you won't go to-day. Your mother'll be so annoyed with me if you go to-day. Promise me to stop at home and——'

'And protect you, you old dear!' She reflected a moment. 'Well, yes; I'll stop at home just this once, if only to keep you out of trouble. Give Mr. Linnell a chance of speaking if he really wants to. Though what on earth poor Psyche'll do without me I'm sure I don't know. She's expecting me to-day. She counts on my coming. I'll have to write and tell her I can't come; and Psyche's so quick, I'm afraid she'll guess exactly why I can't get round this morning to help her.'

The General breathed more freely once more.

'There's a dear girl,' he said, stroking her hair gently. 'Your mother would have been awfully annoyed if you'd gone. She thinks it's wrong of you to encourage young Linnell in his flirtation with that girl. Though I quite agree with you, Geraldine, my dear, that if you don't love a man, you oughtn't to marry him. Only—it'd be a very great comfort to us both, you know, my dear, if

only you could manage ever to love a man who was in a position to keep you as we've always kept you.'

'I don't know how it is,' Geraldine answered reflectively. 'I suppose it's original sin or the natural perversity of human nature coming out in my case; but I never *do* like men with money, and I always fall in love with men without a ha'penny. But, there; I've no time to discuss the abstract question with you now. I must run up at once and write this note to poor Psyche.'

CHAPTER X.

AS BETWEEN GENTLEMEN.

THAT same morning Linnell sat in his own room at the Red Lion, with a letter of Sir Austen's lying open before him, and a look of sad perplexity gathering slowly upon his puckered brow. It was natural, perhaps, that Sir Austen should wish to settle the question once for all before leaving England: natural, too, that Sir Austen should look at the whole matter purely from the point of view of Frank Linnell, 'the parson in Northumberland,' whom alone he had been sedulously taught from his childhood upward to consider as his cousin, though the law would have nothing to do with countenancing their unacknowledged relationship. And yet Linnell was distinctly annoyed. The tone of the letter was anything but a pleasant one. 'Sir Austen Linnell presents his compliments'—what a studiously rude way of addressing his own first-cousin, his next of kin, his nearest relative, the heir to the baronetcy! Linnell took up his pen and, biting his lip, proceeded at once, as was his invariable wont, to answer offhand the unpleasant communication.

'Mr. C. A. Linnell presents his compliments——' No, no; as he wrote, he remembered with a blush that verse of Shelley's, 'Let scorn be not repaid with scorn;' and rising superior to the vulgar desire to equal an adversary in rudeness and disrespect, he crumpled up the half-

written sheet in his hands, and began again upon a fresh page in more cousinly fashion:

'DEAR SIR AUSTEN,

'I can readily understand that your friendship and affection for my half-brother Frank Linnell should prompt you to write to me on the unfortunate question of the succession to the title before leaving England. The subject, I need hardly say, is a painful one to every one of us: to none of us more so, I feel sure, than to myself. But as you are the first to open communications upon it, there can be no reason on earth why I should not answer your queries frankly and straightforwardly without reserve. In the first place, then, during your lifetime I can promise you that I will not overtly or covertly lay claim in any way to the heirship to the title and estates of the baronetcy. In the second place, during my brother Frank's lifetime I will not lay claim to the baronetcy itself, should it ever fall to me, thereby implying any slight upon him or upon my father's memory. But, in the third place, I will not, on the other hand, permit him to put any such slight upon me or upon those whose memory is very dear to me by claiming it for himself without any real legal title. Such a course, I think, would imply a dishonour to one whom I revere more than any other person I have ever met with. I hope this arrangement, by which I practically waive my own rights and my place in the family during my brother's life and yours, will prove satisfactory and pleasing to both of you. With my best wishes for your success in your African trip, I am ever

'Your sincere friend and cousin,

'CHARLES AUSTEN LINNELL.'

He wrote it at one burst. And when he had written it he felt all the lighter for it.

He had an appointment that morning at eleven with Psyche, and as soon as the letter was off his mind he went round to the Wren's Nest trembling with suppressed excitement. In his hand he carried the water-colour sketch of the cottage, now completed and framed, for presentation to Psyche. If he saw her alone, he had it

half in his mind to ask her that morning whether or not she would be his for ever. Those lines from the Lord of Burleigh kept ringing in his ears—

> 'If my heart by signs can tell,
> Maiden, I have watched thee daily,
> And I think thou lov'st me well.'

Surely, surely, Psyche loved him. So timid and sensitive a man as himself could not have been mistaken in his interpretation of her frank confidence and her crimson blushes.

He was not destined to find Psyche alone, however. As he entered, Haviland Dumaresq met him in the garden, tearing up a note from Geraldine to his daughter. The note had annoyed him, if so placid a man could ever be said to display annoyance. It mentioned merely 'in great haste' that Geraldine would not be able to come round and assist at the sitting to-day, as mamma was dreadfully angry about something, and poor papa wanted her to stop and break the brunt of the enemy's assault for him. Psyche knew in a moment what the letter meant—she had old experience of Mrs. Maitland's fancies—and handed it without a word of explanation to her father. The great philosopher took it and read it. 'All women are alike, my child,' he said philosophically, crumpling the paper up in his hand: 'they insist upon making mountains out of molehills. And there's nothing about men that irritates them more than our perverse male habit of seeing the molehill, in spite of all they may say to magnify it, in merely its own proper proportions. A due sense of social perspective is counted to our sex for moral obliquity. Go in and get yourself ready, Psyche. I'll wait out here and talk to Mr. Linnell for you.'

When Linnell arrived upon the scene, picture in hand, a few minutes later, Haviland Dumaresq, straight and proud as ever, stepped forward to meet him, tearing up the peccant letter into shreds as he went, and scattering its fragments over his own dearly-loved and neatly-kept flower-beds. He saw what the water-colour was at a glance, and taking the painter's hand in his own, with

some chilliness in his manner—for it was clear this young man was seeing quite too much of Psyche, when even Mrs. Maitland noticed it and animadverted upon it—he said with the air of a patron of art, not magniloquently at all, but simply and naturally: 'So you've brought home the sketch. We shall be glad to have it.'

Linnell was taken aback by the quiet business assumption implied in his tone, and looking up quickly into the great man's face—for to him Dumaresq was always great, in whatever surroundings—he stammered out in answer, with a certain shamefaced awkwardness: 'I hoped Miss Psyche might be good enough to accept it from me.'

The philosopher glanced back at him with an inquiring gaze. 'Oh no,' he said coldly, examining the picture with a critical eye. 'This sketch was a commission. I asked you to do it for us. You must let me pay you whatever's proper for it.'

Linnell hardly knew whether to feel more amused or annoyed. Dumaresq, he felt sure, must have received his eight hundred guineas already, and he inclined to assume a princely air of patronage to art on the strength of this sudden access of unwonted opulence. Still, even though the money came directly out of his own pocket, he couldn't bear to sell the sketch of Haviland Dumaresq's cottage to the great philosopher—and to Psyche's father.

'It was a labour of love,' he ventured to say with quiet persistence, in spite of Dumaresq's chilling austerity. 'I did it with more than my usual success, I dare to think, because I was inspired by the importance of the subject, and because I thought you would allow me to present it as a memento to Miss Dumaresq. Besides, you know, it's only right she should accept it from me in return for the trouble I've given her about the other painting. Your daughter has put me under great obligations in permitting me to paint her in the foreground of my Academy picture.'

Dumaresq drew himself up even more stiffly than before.

'My daughter,' he said with a very cold and clear intonation, 'is not, as you seem to think, a professional model. She doesn't expect payment in any way for her

services. If her face is of use to you for the purposes of art, we are both of us glad that art should be the richer for it. A beautiful face is a gift of nature, intended for the common good of humanity: a beautiful picture makes the world so much the better for its existence and its beauty. I would not grudge to art the power to multiply beautiful faces—and Psyche's *is* beautiful—to the utmost of its ability. But you must tell me how much I owe you for this sketch, all the same. It's unbecoming the dignity both of art and philosophy that an artist and a philosopher should haggle together in the matter of price over such a subject.'

Linnell bowed his head in silent acquiescence. After all, he thought to himself, fifty pounds was not worth fighting about; the money in the end came out of his own pocket. And he didn't wish to offend Psyche's father. In a very little time, perhaps—and his heart beat high—it would matter very little which of them had the money, himself or Psyche.

'If you insist upon it, Mr. Dumaresq,' he said at last with a painful effort, 'though it's a great disappointment to me not to be permitted to offer the picture as a present to your daughter, we'll make it, as you prefer, a matter of business. Suppose then, by way of putting a price upon it, we set down the value at twenty guineas.'

Haviland Dumaresq drew a long breath. This was eleven pounds more than his utmost imagination. But he was far too proud to show his surprise openly. He had Macmurdo and White's twenty-pound note that moment in his pocket. He drew it forth with calm determination, like a man to whom twenty pounds is less than nothing, and adding to it a sovereign from his purse, laid it simply in the painter's palm. The coin burned into Linnell's hand, for he, too, was proud—proud and sensitive. He had never been paid so brusquely in his life before, and the hard matter-of-fact mode of the business transaction made him for the very first time feel ashamed of his profession. But he gave no outward sign, any more than Dumaresq himself had done, of his internal feelings. He thrust the money loose with his hand into his trousers pocket, and muttering something inarticulate

about the lights being bad to-day for painting, begged to be excused from going on with the portrait. Then he turned around, and walked slowly out of the garden gate, and up on to the Downs, where he wandered long alone, reflecting bitterly with himself that great men, when you come to see them at close quarters, fail often in the end to correspond with one's preconceived opinion of their innate greatness. It must be always so. They give the people of their best, of course; and the people judge the whole by the sample.

As for poor Psyche, who, waiting in the drawing-room, had heard this brief colloquy through the open window, she went upstairs to her own bedroom, and, flinging herself on the bed in her Arab costume, cried her poor little eyes out to think that papa should behave so harshly to that dear Mr. Linnell, who admired him so much, and would give his life almost to do anything for either of them.

For Psyche, too, in her clear girlish way, was quite certain that Linnell loved her.

CHAPTER XI.

FOOL'S PARADISE.

HAVILAND DUMARESQ, left to himself in the garden, paced up and down the narrow gravel walk, and turned over in his mind all these things seriously. Could it be that Mrs. Maitland was right, after all? Was the painter man really coming after Psyche?

Women are lynx-eyed in matters of emotional expression, he reflected to himself in his generalizing way: in that they resemble savages and the lower animals. Yes, and the women of the inferior intellectual grades, like Mrs. Maitland, are more lynx-eyed as a rule even than others: the lower the grade, the more developed the instinctive perceptive faculty. Their intuitions stand them in stead of reason. And such intuitions seldom err. No doubt she was right: no doubt she was right. The young man wanted to marry Psyche.

But in that case what ought he himself, as a father, to do? The young man had probably neither money nor position.

In any other relation of life, indeed, Haviland Dumaresq would never have thought for one moment of inquiring about either of those adventitious circumstances. And he would have regarded their possession to a great extent as a positive disadvantage to the man who was cumbered with them. Money, he would have said, was a bar to exertion: position was antagonistic to wide human sympathies. Those men best know the universe in which they live, those men best love their kind and all other kinds, who earn their own bread by the sweat of their brow, and who have felt the keen spur and common bond of hunger. So, as recommendations to a man in the abstract, poverty and insignificance were far more important in Haviland Dumaresq's mind than money and position.

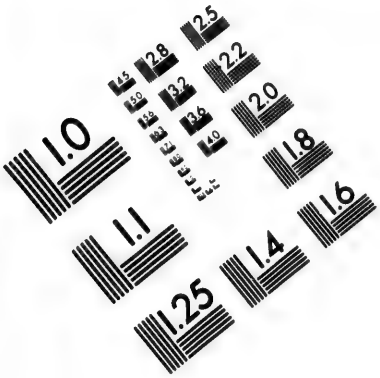
But where Psyche was concerned things seemed quite otherwise. The old philosopher had wasted his own life in the way he liked best, in obedience to the imperious demands of his own inmost and highest nature; but he wasn't going to let that beautiful girl of his waste hers in the same foolish spendthrift manner: she should profit, he whispered to himself fondly, by her father's hard and dearly-bought experience. For his own part, Haviland Dumaresq would not have taken from Charles Linnell a twenty-guinea picture; but for Psyche he was ready to take from the first comer ten thousand a year, and a title, and a castle, and a place in the Peerage, and anything else of the vulgar estimation that the world, the mere wealthy commonplace world, could give him. He was prepared to debase himself to Mrs. Maitland's level.

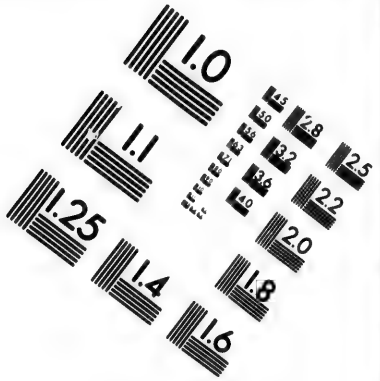
A twenty-guinea picture indeed! The young man seemed to ask twenty guineas for it as if money were water. Nay, he seemed actually to be putting the price very low, as a matter of friendship to a special purchaser—and if so, Haviland Dumaresq felt he ought certainly to resent the uncalled-for liberty, for what right had the fellow to presume upon doing him a favour when he didn't even so much as wish it? But,

setting that aside, and thinking only of Psyche, if the young man could really get twenty guineas—or more—for a mere casual water-colour sketch, mightn't the matter be worth inquiring into, after all? Mightn't he be a rising and well-to-do artist? Haviland Dumaresq hated himself for the unworthy thought; but for Psyche's sake he must hunt up something about this twenty-guinea painter fellow.

After all, painters are often somebodies—even as the world judges, often somebodies. A painter—Heaven forgive him for so low a point of view of an ennobling art—a painter may rise to be P.R.A. at last, and gain a knighthood, and be petted and admired, and earn lots of money, and lose his own soul—whatever was highest and purest and best within him—and make his wife be called My Lady, and give her all that money can buy of place and pleasure, and drive her out in the Park in a carriage with footmen, and take her to Court, like an African savage, bedizened with powder and paint and ostrich-feathers. Pah! the lowness, the meanness, the vulgarity, the barbarism of it! But for Psyche! A painter may often be a really rich man. Why, yes, he was really and truly sinking to the abject level of a Mrs. Maitland.

Mrs. Maitland! An idea! The note! The note! What made Mrs. Maitland angry about Psyche? Not merely because Psyche had got an admirer. Clearly, she must have thought that Psyche was setting her cap—as she would call it in her own hideous matchmaking dialect—at this twenty-guinea painter fellow. But if so, that meant, as Haviland Dumaresq instinctively knew, that Mrs. Maitland wanted the painter fellow herself for Geraldine. And surely Mrs. Maitland wouldn't want the young man unless she was sure he was a good investment. The Maitlands lived up to the very last penny of the General's pay and the very last farthing of Mrs. Maitland's small fortune. The boys were expensive: one in the army; two at Sandhurst or Marlborough; and one who, as his mother ingeniously observed, had 'failed for everything,' and must now be shipped off to try his fortune in New Zealand or Manitoba. It was positively





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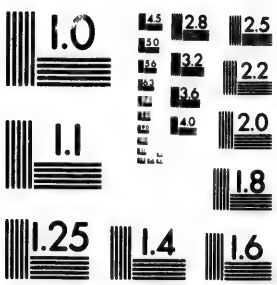

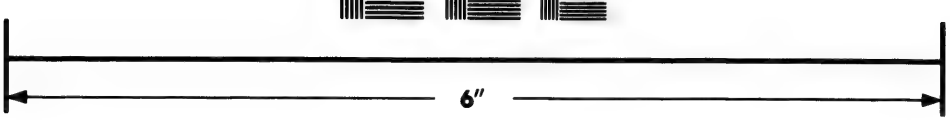

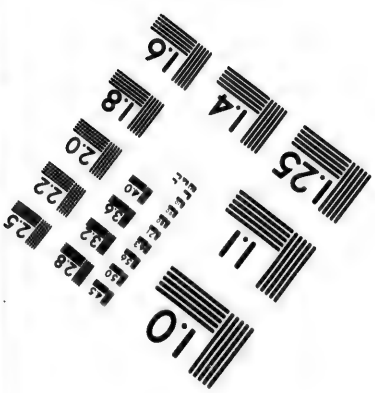

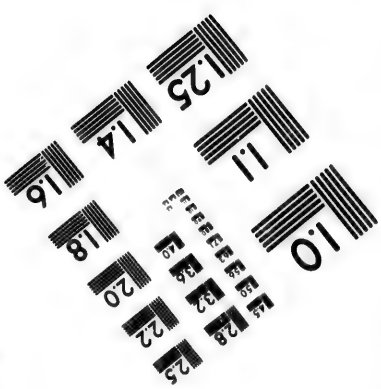

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necessary, as the Maitlands would put it, that Geraldine should marry a man with money. And a man with money enough for Geraldine Maitland would presumably have money enough for his Psyche also.

Haviland Dumaresq paced up and down the garden-walk, revolving these things long in his own troubled mind, turning them all over this way and that, and unable to arrive at any decision about them. At last, wearied out with his own anxious thought, he sat down on the bench under the gnarled old apple-tree, and taking from his waistcoat pocket that small cardboard box with the silver-coated pellets, raised one of them mechanically to his trembling lips to calm his nerves from the tempest that possessed them.

Psyche's happiness! Ay, Psyche's happiness! It was no less than Psyche's happiness that was at stake. And to Haviland Dumaresq, now that the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy' was well off his hands, and launched upon posterity, the universe consisted mainly of Psyche. Talk about the anthropocentric fallacy indeed! Who had done more to dispel that illusion than Haviland Dumaresq? Who had shown more clearly than he that instead of the universe revolving about man as its fixed point and centre, man was but a single unimportant species, on the wrinkled surface of an unimportant satellite, attached by gravity to an unimportant sun—the final product of arrested radiant energy on the outer crust of an insignificant speck in boundless space? And yet, when it came to the actual internal world, was it not also a fact that for Haviland Dumaresq the central point in all the universe was Psyche, Psyche, Psyche, Psyche? and that around her as primary all the suns and constellations circled in their orbits like obedient servants? Was it not for her that the cosmos itself loosed the bands of Orion and shed the sweet influences of the Pleiades through long leagues of space upon her nightly dreams?

He was roused from his reverie by a footstep on the gravel path outside; not the footstep of a labourer slouching by to work on the allotments beyond—Haviland Dumaresq, in his inferential fashion, knew it at once for the firm and even tread of a gentleman.

The Loamshire hinds loiter about like the half-emancipated serfs they still are, he said to himself quietly: this is the step of a freeman born, who walks the soil of England as if it belonged to him. And sure enough, raising his eyes across the hedge, he saw before him Reginald Mansel.

'Ha, Mansel,' he cried, beckoning his painter neighbour to turn aside into the garden, 'this is luck indeed! Coincidence seldom comes so pat. You're the very man I wanted to see. I've made my first appearance on this or any other stage as an art-patron to-day, and I'd like you to come and judge of my purchase. What do you say to this, now?' And he held up the water-colour, which lay beside him still on the rustic seat, for Mansel's critical and professional opinion.

The artist glanced at it with a smile of recognition.

'What, Linnell's?' he cried. 'Oh, I saw it earlier. I've watched it along through all its stages. It's a very good sketch—very good indeed. He never did better, to my mind, with an English subject. Not over-elaborated with those finikin touches which often spoil Linnell's best work. It's a perfect little idyll in green and ultramarine.' And he eyed it appreciatively.

'You like it, then?' Dumaresq asked in a curious tone.

'Like it? Well, of course. One can't help liking everything of Linnell's. He has the true touch of genius in all his work, if only he were a little bit less supremely self-conscious.'

'What do you think I gave for it?' the old man suggested, with his head on one side like a critical connoisseur.

'Gave for it?' Mansel repeated with an incredulous stare. 'You don't mean to say, then, Dumaresq, you've actually bought it?'

'Bought it and paid for it,' the philosopher answered, with something very like unphilosophic complacency, enjoying his hearer's obvious surprise. 'Ah, you didn't think I went in for pictures! Well, I don't, as a rule: I leave those things to the great of this world. But, you see, as this was a special subject, of peculiar interest to

myself and Psyche, I thought I couldn't let it fall to a mere stranger. I'd fix it at once: I'd keep it in the family. So I commissioned it beforehand, I think you call it; and when Linnell came round this afternoon I paid him his price and gi'ed it in hond, like the Northern Farmer. How much should you say, now, I ought to have spent upon it?'

Mansel regarded first the picture and then the philosopher in hesitating silence for a few seconds.

'Well,' he said irresolutely, after an awkward pause, 'I don't know, of course, what Linnell's likely to have put it at for you; no doubt he let you have it a little cheaper; but the picture as a picture is worth fifty guineas.'

'Fifty guineas!' Dumaresq echoed in dismayed astonishment.

'Yes, fifty guineas,' Mansel answered quietly. 'Linnell commands his market, you know. He could get that for it any day in London.'

Haviland Dumaresq's gray eyes flashed sudden fire. His first thought was that Linnell had been guilty of rank disrespect to his person and position in letting him have a fifty-guinea picture at considerably less than half-price. Poor he might be—he had sat up half last night, indeed, toiling like a galley-slave at a penny-a-lining article on the Conservation of Energy for his hard task-masters' 'Popular Instructor' at eight shillings a page—but what right had a painter fellow, whom he'd hardly even seen in his life yet, to lower prices for *him*, like a beggarly skinflint, or to take it for granted he couldn't with ease, from the plenitude of his wealth, spare fifty guineas?

His second thought was that a man who could earn fifty guineas 'any day in London' for a bit of a water-colour no bigger than a page of the *Athenæum*, might perhaps after all be able to make Psyche happy.

'That's a very large sum,' he said, drawing a long breath and looking hard at Mansel. 'Men of letters get nothing like that for their work, I'm afraid. But, then, they don't have anything to sell which can minister to the selfish monopolist vanity of the rich and idle. No

Manchester merchant can hang upon his walls a unique copy of "Paradise Lost" or a solitary exemplar of the "Novum Organum,' and say to his friends after dinner with vulgar pride: "Look here, So-and-so, that's Milton's or Bacon's greatest work. I paid fifty thousand guineas down for that lot." Still, even so, I'm surprised to hear you painters earn your money so easily. Twenty guineas seemed to me in my ignorance a very big price indeed to pay for it.'

'Oh, Linnell can get that readily enough,' Mansel answered with a short uneasy laugh. 'His oils he sells at good prices at Christie's. His water colours are snapped up every year at the Institute. But then, you know, they take him a good bit of time. He's a slow worker, and doesn't get through many canvases in the course of a twelvemonth.'

'Now, how much do you suppose a painter of his sort ought to earn on an average per annum?' Dumaresq asked offhand, with too evident an assumption of easy carelessness. 'How would his income compare, for example, with an author's or a journalist's?'

'Well, I really can't say,' Mansel answered, smiling, and perceiving his questioner's drift at once. 'Perhaps some five or six hundred, all told; perhaps a thousand; perhaps more than that. But then,' he added, his thoughts keeping pace all along with Dumaresq's, 'he may have private means of his own as well, you know. He spends freely. I've never known him pressed for cash. I don't think he lives altogether on his pictures.'

'No?'—with keen interest.

'No; I should say not. I've always imagined he had means of his own. For one thing, he had plenty, I know, at Christ Church.'

'He was at Christ Church, was he?' Dumaresq put in reflectively. 'An expensive college—the most fashionable at Oxford. A man must have money who goes to Christ Church!'

'Not necessarily,' Mansel answered, putting him off the scent once more. 'I was there myself, you remember, and Heaven knows I was poor enough in those days, in all conscience. But then, I had a studentship of eighty

pounds a year, which makes a difference, of course: whereas Linnell came up as an ordinary commoner.'

'And you think he has money, then?' Dumaresq asked eagerly.

'I think so. But, mind, I know nothing about it. Linnell was always the most reticent and mysterious of men, full of small reserves and petty mystifications. He never told anybody a word about himself. He's always been close, provokingly close. For aught I know, he may be as poor as a church mouse in reality; and for aught I know, again, he may be as rich as Crœsus. So far as my observation goes, he always acts like a wealthy man, and talks like a poor one. But if anybody ever taxes him with opulence, he resents the imputation as a positive slight, and declares with effusion he's almost on the very verge of beggary.'

'Many rich men,' Dumaresq mused dreamily, 'are pursued with a peculiar form of mania called *timor paupertatis*, and what you say's just one of its recognised symptoms—that the sufferer never will admit his wealth, for fear other people should try to swindle him or rob him or beg of him. You may remember that in the fourth volume of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy"—the volume that deals with Heteropathic Affections in the Empirical Individual—I bring the phenomenon of concealment of wealth under the same law with the pseudomorphic corrugation of cooling nebulæ and the facts of mimicry in animal evolution. It's a most interesting branch of psychological study. I shall watch this young man. I shall watch him—I shall watch him.'

He spoke in a droning, half-sleepy undertone; and Mansel, who had seen the great thinker more than once in this state before, and who always felt creepy at the strange look in his eyes, made haste to concoct some plausible excuse for a hurried departure.

'When Dumaresq gets into that curious vein,' he said to himself internally, 'philosopher or no philosopher, he's simply unendurable. From a man of singular intellect and genius, he dwindles down at once into a mere bore. All his brilliancy and ability seems to desert him, and he talks platitudes to you three times over in varying

language, like the veriest old driveller at the Seniors in London. When these fits come upon him, the wise man will do well to leave him alone. He goes silly for the nonce: *hunc tu Romane caveto.*' And he walked off, whistling, to his own studio.

But Haviland Dumaresq, having learned all he wanted from Linnell's friend, strolled away by himself, regardless of lunch, upon the open Downs, that overlook the sea with their bare green knolls and their deep curved hollows. He strolled along, crushing rich flowers under foot as he went, wrapped up in his own thoughts, and with the poison within him gaining deeper and deeper hold upon his swimming and reeling brain each moment. The sun shone high over the purple sea; the hills rolled boundless and undulating before him; the noise of the bell upon the foremost wether of the ruddled flock that cropped close grass in the combe hard by rang distant in his ear like most delicious music. Birds sang; bees hummed; gorse crackled; grasshoppers chirped; the scent of wild thyme hung thick on the air. The opium was transforming earth into heaven for him. Space swelled, as it always swelled into infinite abysses for Haviland Dumaresq when the intoxicating drug had once taken full possession of his veins and fibres. The horizon spread boundless in vast perspective with its clear blue line against the pale gray sky; the shadows in the hollow combes lengthened and deepened into romantic gloom; the hills rose up in huge expansive throes, and became as high mountains to his dilated vision. A white gull flapped its gleaming wings overhead: to Dumaresq it revealed itself as some monstrous albatross. His own stature even seemed to double itself as he stalked along the dividing line of open ridge, till he loomed in his own eyes larger than human on the bald and rounded crest of the gigantic hog's back. All nature assumed a more heroic cast: he walked no longer our prosaic world: each step appeared to carry him over illimitable space: he trod with Dante the broad floor of Paradise.

And wonderful vistas opened ahead for Psyche also. She, too, his darling, she, too, should be happy. This man who had come to woo her in disguise, he was rich,

he was great, there was mystery about him. In his present ecstatic frame of mind, Haviland Dumaresq hugged and magnified the mystery. The poetic element in his nature, sternly repressed by the philosophic side in his saner moments, found free vent at times in the unnatural exaltation of narcotic excitement, and ran riot in wild day-dreams of impossible splendour. He had passed through the golden gate to-day. He saw his Psyche decked out in all the barbaric splendour of pearl and diamond that his soul despised: he saw her floating in silks and gauzy stuffs and laces: he saw her circling round in the giddy dance, one blaze of glory, in the glittering rooms and slippery halls that he hated and eschewed as surviving relics of savage and barbaric anti-social luxury. High-stepping grays whirled her along in state in a light and graceful carriage through thoroughfares of over-wealthy fashion. Flunkeys, whom Haviland Dumaresq could have kicked with pleasure, bowed, door in servile hand, to see her take her seat on the padded cushions. Massive silver and Venetian glass and hideous marvels of cunning architecture in ice and sugar loaded the table at whose head she sat in dainty brocade or in shimmering satin. Money, money, money, money: the dross he despised, the pleasure he looked down upon, the vulgar aims and ends he himself had cast like dirt behind him—he dreamed them all for the daughter he loved, and was no longer ashamed: for Haviland Dumaresq the philosopher was dead within him now, and there remained for the moment but that shell or husk, Haviland Dumaresq the incipient opium-eater. He had forgotten everything but the joy of his day-dream, and he stalked ever forward, more asleep than awake, yet walking on sturdily, with exalted nerves, towards the edge of the Down, to the broad blue sea, that danced and gleamed with pearl and sapphire in the bright sunshine before him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BUBBLE BURSTS.

SUDDENLY, after walking on in a dreamy way for miles and miles over the springy turf, he hardly knew how, the old man found himself beside a clump of gorse, face to face with the mysterious painter fellow. He started at the sight. Linnell had come up to the Downs, too, to walk off his chagrin, and to swallow as best he might his disappointment at not seeing Psyche.

Always sensitive, the young artist was more morbidly sensitive than usual where women were concerned. To say the truth, he had known but little of woman's society. Rich as he was and cultivated to the finger-ends, the circumstances of his life had thrown Linnell to an exceptionally small degree into contact with families. His world was a world of clubs and studios and men's lounging places: so little had he seen of the other sex that he hardly felt himself at home, even now, in a lady's drawing-room.

This was not to be wondered at. His mother had died before he left America; at Oxford he had fallen in with none but college acquaintances; his English cousins refused to acknowledge him: and the Boston-bred lad, shy and ill at ease from his congenital lameness, and the strangeness of the novel surroundings in whose midst he was thrown, found himself cast at nineteen entirely on his own resources in the matter of gaining an introduction into our cold and austere English Society. It wasn't surprising, therefore, that he knew hardly anyone except his brother painters; or that he loved to escape from the vast blank of London life to the freedom and the space of the African desert. There at least he felt perfectly at home with the world: there no Bedouin ever trod on his social corns, no distracting matron ever strove to win him from his Bohemian solitude to the irksome respectability of white ties or five o'clock tea-tables.

So Linnell, perhaps, made a little more of a girl's fancy, as he thought it, than most other men of his age and

position would have dreamed of doing. He had retired to the Downs to brood over the supposed slight to his feelings in private; but a brisk walk upon the bracing turf, all alive with orchids and blue viper's bugloss, had almost succeeded in restoring him to equanimity again, when all at once a sudden turn into a small combe brought him up sharp, with unexpected abruptness, full in front of Haviland Dumaresq.

The old man gazed at him vacantly for a moment. His eyes were glazed and very hazy; they explored space for some seconds with a distant interest. Then, on a sudden, he seemed to wake up into life with a start, and recognising the painter with a burst of intuition, laid his hand with quite a kindly air upon Linnell's shoulder.

The gesture took the young man completely by surprise, for Dumaresq was one of those self-restrained, self-respecting natures whose strong sense of individuality in others assumes the form of an almost instinctive shrinking from anything that borders upon personal contact. Linnell looked the philosopher back in the face with a melting expression of mingled doubt and pleasure, as he hesitated slightly.

'I wanted to speak with you Linnell,' Haviland Dumaresq began in a dreamy voice, motioning the young man over to a dry bank in the broad sunshine. 'I want, in point of fact, to apologize, or at least to explain to you. I'm afraid I was perhaps a trifle brusque with you at my cottage this morning. No, don't say I wasn't; I know I spoke sharply. Perhaps I even hurt your feelings. My training in life has not, I fear, been of a sort to encourage sensitiveness in myself, or to make me sympathize with it as much as I ought in others. I'm aware that I often err in that respect. But if I erred it was not through any personal intent, but under the influence of a strong impelling motive. I've been exercised in mind a good deal of late. There's something, in short, I want to speak about to you.'

He went on still in a thick, half-dreamy, wandering tone, and his dilated pupils seemed to fix themselves vaguely on a point in infinity; but he delivered his words with regularity and ease, though somewhat stiffly,

and it was evident to Linnell that he was making a very strong effort to master himself for some great object, under the influence of some fierce overpowering emotion. The painter allowed the old man to lead him unresisting to the bank, and took his seat beside him with a beating heart, wondering what of good or evil for himself or Psyche this strange exordium might prove to forebode, and anxiously awaiting its further development.

'I wasn't at all annoyed, Mr. Dumaresq,' he said in a low voice, perhaps not quite truthfully; 'only a little grieved that a man—well—whom I so much admired and respected as yourself, should refuse to accept so small a present from me.'

'But it cost you a good deal of time and trouble,' Dumaresq answered slowly, in the same fixed, mechanical, far-away voice; 'and time is money, you know, Linnell—time is money. I shouldn't feel it right to occupy so much of a young man's time without making him what I thought an adequate repayment. You must forgive me that: it's a principle of mine; rather a sacrifice to my own ideas as to individuality than an act of unfriendliness toward any particular person.' Then he added suddenly in a very different tone: 'I'm an old man, you must remember—a worn-out old man. I've wasted my life in a hard service—the service of science, the service of humanity. Bear with me, bear with me, a little while, I beg of you. I'm an old, old man. There's not much now left of me.'

Linnell was touched by his appealing look—the look for a moment of the real Haviland Dumaresq, who felt in his great heart the full pathos of his own unrequited sacrifice for the good of his kind, as he firmly believed it.

'Indeed,' the young man made answer earnestly, 'I wasn't vexed, Mr. Dumaresq. I only wanted you to accept a small tribute, in part payment as a single instalment, from one who owes to you intellectually and morally more than he can ever find words to tell you. And as to the picture, it really didn't take me long. I value my own work very lightly indeed. I should have thought myself more than repaid for my pains in painting it if a

man whom I respect and revere so much would have condescended to accept it from me and keep it as a memento.'

'You remember what I told you the other evening,' the old man replied, with a more searching glance at his companion's features. 'Do as I say, my friend, and not as I do, if you wish to flourish. Don't despise money foolishly—as I have done. My advice to a young man setting out in life is simply this: Follow the world; the world is wisest. You can't afford to fling away sovereigns like water. You're a painter, and you must live by the practice of your art. Now, why did you sell me that picture so cheap? Mansel came in after you'd left this morning, and told me you could have got fifty guineas for it any day in London.' He clasped his hand gently round the painter's arm. 'Don't be utopian, my dear fellow,' he went on with unwonted colloquialism. 'Tell me why you let me have it for twenty.'

Linnell blushed and hesitated a moment. At last he determined to blurt out the truth and shame the devil. 'Because I knew you couldn't afford more, Mr. Dumaresq,' he said shyly.

Haviland Dumaresq did not resent the unexpected remark. 'You were right,' he answered with a sigh. 'I am poor, poor. The money I gave you was all I had in the house just then. You have been quite frank with me, and I'm quite frank with you in return. I have still to earn to-morrow's dinner.'

A strange doubt flitted for a moment across Linnell's mind. His eight hundred guineas, then? What on earth could have become of them? Was it possible that Haviland Dumaresq, the deepest and broadest of living thinkers, could stoop to tell him so despicable a lie? But no! impossible! He rejected the idea with scorn, as any man with one spark of nobility in his nature must needs have rejected it. No doubt Macmurdo and White hadn't yet sent in their annual account. The secret of Dumaresq's new-made opulence was not yet out; he was still unaware of the magnificent sum of which he was already potentially master.

'It's terrible,' the young man said, breaking the short

pause, 'that after all you have wrought and done for the world you should still be able to say *that* to-day—you, the greatest thinker in our modern Europe.'

'Not for me,' the old stoic answered with a resigned nod: 'not terrible for me: I'm used to it: it suits me; but for Psyche, I grant you, yes: for Psyche; for Psyche.'

'Miss Dumaresq deserves all the world can give her,' Linnell replied boldly.

The old man's eye fired up once more with a brilliant flash, and then grew slowly dim again. If only he could see his way to make Psyche happy! He wasn't sordidly anxious to sell her for gold: oh no, oh no; he would sell her to no man: but he wanted to see his Psyche happy. He clutched Linnell's hand once more and spoke earnestly, fervently. 'Listen here,' he cried in more vivid tones; 'you're a friend—a disciple. I can tell you. I can trust you. I know I've thrown away my own life: I could endure that easily, if that were all; but that's not all. I've thrown away hers too; I've failed in my duty to her. You can't think how that wrong weighs upon my spirit now. I ought to have toiled and moiled and slaved and sweated, not to write the "Encyclopædic Philosophy" for the good of the race—how little that matters!—but to carve out for my child a place in the world well worthy of her. One or the other course I might rightly have pursued; but not both together. If I meant to devote my life to philosophy, I should never have been a father. Becoming a father, I ought to have devoted my life to *her* alone. I gave a hostage to fortune, and I failed to redeem it. I became responsible for a life, and I failed to guarantee it a proper future. And now in my helpless old age I see my error. I see it too late; I see it too late; I see it, and I pay for it.'

'You are wrong,' Linnell answered firmly. 'So great a life as yours demands a great account to be given at last of it. The vast organizing genius, the wonderful brain that conceived and wrought out the "Encyclopædic Philosophy," was not only your own to do as you would with: it was a gift held in trust by you for the world and

for the ages. You played your part well. It is for us, the remainder, who profit by your just and due, yet none the less splendid and self-sacrificing, use of your own great powers, to see that neither you nor she is a loser by your grand and unselfish action.'

'You think so?' the old man asked, looking up at him with a passing expression of doubt.

Linnell hesitated, like one caught in a trap. Was the philosopher trying to probe his secret? 'I think so,' he answered aloud after a short struggle.

'Then that brings me back at once to what I wanted to say to you in confidence to-day,' Dumaresq continued, glancing at him with a strangely remorseful face. 'Mr. Linnell, I'm going to trust you. You understand exactly how I feel towards Psyche. I know how sweet and rare a flower it is that blooms around the wreck of my ruined life. I know it, and I cherish her as she ought to be cherished—jealously, scrupulously, reverently, tenderly. I want my child to fill her proper place in life: I want to see her happy before I die. Unless she goes away to fill it and to be happy—well, I hope she may cling to the ruin still while there's anything left of it to hold together.'

'Yes,' Linnell answered, half chilled by his words. He sympathized, in a way, with that strange old man; but Dumaresq had struck by accident the feeblest of all the resonant chords in his complex nature for a father to work upon. No apt response could there be expected.

'Yes,' the old man answered, his eyes growing tenderer each moment as he spoke, and his lips quivering. 'Pardon me if I've noticed your feelings towards my daughter. I know you've been seeing a great deal of Psyche lately. I know Psyche's been thinking a great deal of you. It surprises you that I should have noticed it! Ah, well, that shows you don't know how closely I watch over Psyche. You fancy I'm blind to these things, because I'm old, and a dreamer, and a philosopher, and a stoic. No doubt, where human trivialities are concerned, I'm often blind; I see nothing. You can't keep your whole soul fixed at once upon the main order of the cosmos and the minutest details of Mrs. Grundy's dinner-

parties. But where even the veriest trivialities touch my Psyche, my eyes are at once as sharp as a lynx's. Then the blind bat wakes up and sees: the mole opens his narrow eyelids, shakes the dust of grimy burrowings from his coat, creeps out from his hole, and peers about him with the sharp vision of a very Argus. That's how it is when Psyche's in question.' He took Linnell's hand in his own for a moment once more. 'Bear with me,' he went on pleadingly—'bear with a father who asks you only because he loves his daughter. I don't want to see her affections too deeply engaged without knowing what are the prospects of her future happiness. You love Psyche; oh yes, I know it. You can't conceal *that* from me. I have eyes. I see it. But before Psyche commits herself to loving *you*, I must earnestly ask you—as a father, I feel compelled to ask you—are you in a position to marry?—have you the means and the power to make Psyche happy?'

It was not an unnatural question for a father to put, as fathers go: even a man less hardly tried by fortune and less devoted to his daughter than Haviland Dumaresq might easily have asked it. But nothing could have been worse adapted for meeting a man of Linnell's nature. The painter's quick suspicion was aroused at once. Dumaresq's ardour chilled him.

'I never said,' he answered, disengaging his hand with difficulty from the old man's grasp, 'that I made any pretensions to be regarded as one of Miss Dumaresq's suitors. That honour is one I never ventured to claim. It would be the more usual course to ask me such a question as you now ask me when I came before you of my own accord to beg your consent, after I had already made sure of your daughter's wishes. As it is, you discount the future somewhat too brusquely—you have no reason to suppose my feelings towards Miss Dumaresq are anything warmer than those of the merest polite admiration.'

'The more usual course!' Haviland Dumaresq answered, looking across at him with a profoundly surprised air. 'The more usual course! and Psyche's happiness at stake! Ah, Linnell, Linnell, you don't know how I watch over her! Where Psyche's concerned, do you

think it matters to me one farthing what's usual? I know how you feel. You're young, and you love her. For you, and for her, that would be quite enough, of course. At your ages, that's all young blood should think about. In the fitness of things, I acknowledge your attitude. But *me!* I tell you, it's my duty to guard her with all my soul from her own too hasty or too foolish feelings. I know what it all means—poverty; long waiting; a cheek grown pale with hope deferred; an imprudent marriage at last; my darling worn out with infinite petty cares and sordid shifts of a young family, brought up too scantily. I've seen it and known it. Would it be right of me to let Psyche expose herself to all that? If I see you're beginning to think of my Psyche, mustn't I make sure for myself beforehand who and what you are, and what you can do to make her happy? Don't suppose I'm so blind as not to know you think of her. No man reads emotional expression worse than I do, I know—my mind moves on a different plane from that—but I must be a poor reader and speller indeed if I couldn't spell out what's written in letters as big as my fist across your very forehead—what pervades every act and look and word of yours whenever I see you one moment near her. So I venture to ask you now in plain words beforehand, if my Psyche loves you as you love her, are you in a position to make her happy?'

'Mr. Dumaresq,' Linnell cried, taken aback, 'I beg of you, I pray you, whatever you do, not to breathe or whisper one word of this to—to Psyche. I can't bear to think that Haviland Dumaresq should be capable of speaking to me in such a strain; for many reasons which you will readily guess, it would surprise and distress your daughter even more profoundly. Don't let her know—pure, and beautiful, and shrinking as she is—don't let her know you have so thrust her name in such a connection upon a perfect stranger. For her sake, for the sake of her maidenly dignity, which *I* at least respect if *you* do not, forbear to speak to me any more about her. I will not admit I have any other feeling on earth towards Miss Dumaresq; but I have at least too much reverence and regard for her position to breathe her name

to any man living before I have asked her own permission to discuss her.'

Haviland Dumaresq paused irresolute for a moment; then he answered once more, in a very soft voice:

'You say well,' he murmured; 'but—you admit the impeachment. What you allow is more than what you deny. I won't put my question, therefore, on the ground to which you object; but I will ask you plainly, as a matter of general abstract information, which I'm anxious to obtain, have you any means of your own of a private sort, or do you live—well, entirely by the practice of your profession?'

'And I will answer you,' Linnell replied, drawing himself up with a determined air, 'that the question of my income is one which lies entirely between myself and the Commissioners of Inland Revenue.'

'Your answer is evasive,' Dumaresq said, drawing back and eyeing him hard with that keen clear glance of his. 'If anything except Psyche's happiness were at stake, I ought to take the hint and forbear to press you. But *there* I can't help myself: for the very way in which you say it makes me see you're trying to hide from me, for some inexplicable reason, the fact that you have money.' He drew his hand across his forehead with a vague dim air. Again the strange dreaminess seemed to come like a cloud across him. His eye grew glazed. 'For myself,' he went on slowly, 'I care nothing for money. You know I care nothing. For myself I despise it. Have I not worked like a galley-slave all my life long, on bread and water sometimes, in the service of truth, caring for nothing—money, honour, fame—if only I could fulfil my appointed life-task? When did any man bribe me with gold or with position? When did any man turn me from my high purpose? But for Psyche, oh, for Psyche, I'm very jealous. I can't bear to think that Psyche should lead a life of drudgery. I toil hard for her now; but I can't toil much longer. I'm almost worn out. I want to know that after my time Psyche will be happy. It would be wrong for me to let her get her affections engaged with anyone who hasn't the means to keep her as she deserves to be kept. That must be my excuse for reading your

secret. At any rate I've read it. I can see it—I can see it: I can see you have money.' He repeated the word dreamily once or twice to himself, 'Money, money, money, money.'

Linnell recoiled from him with a startled look of surprise and annoyance. Had he known under what strange influence Haviland Dumaresq spoke, he might have been less astonished: as it was, he could hardly believe these words came from the lips of the Encyclopædic Philosopher and Psyche's father! The painter's disillusionment was indeed for the moment complete. His idol had truly feet of clay.

'You make a mistake,' he answered coldly, with a repellent air. 'But I myself am in no way answerable for it. I have never given either you or Miss Dumaresq the slightest reason for believing that I laid any claim in any way to the possession of riches. If the thought ever occurred to me—and I do not say it did—that I might perhaps venture to aspire—that I might ask Miss Dumaresq to share her life with me, then certainly it occurred to me only in the form that I might ask her to share a journeyman painter's early struggles—and perhaps in the end his success also. I thought she would sympathize with such an attitude. I thought she would not refuse to aid me in my first endeavours. If I asked at all, I would ask Miss Dumaresq to accept me just as I am; to take me for the sake of myself and my heart; to inspire my work and to accept my devotion. It surprises me to hear you talk as you do.' He paused for a moment. 'If I had not heard it from your own lips,' he added slowly, 'I could never have believed it of Haviland Dumaresq. Even now I cannot believe but that Haviland Dumaresq's daughter would surely behave in a way more befitting her father's character. If ever she marries any man, she will marry him, I firmly hold, not for money, not for position, not even for happiness, but just because she loves him. And if ever I ask Miss Dumaresq to accept me, it would be on that ground, and on that ground alone, that I could think of asking her.'

Were ever unconformable natures more inopportunely thrown together? By pure accident, either's angles

offended the other mortally. They came so close in most ways, yet with such unfortunate capacities for creating mutual misunderstandings.

The old man's face relaxed rapidly. The collapse from an opium paradise is often almost miraculous in its suddenness. The gay bubble bursts even more quickly and strangely than it swelled. As Haviland Dumaresq sat and listened to Linnell's cold and guarded answer, the effect of the drug, which was already beginning naturally to wear off under the influence of exercise, cleared away all at once in a horrid awakening, when the disenchanted dreamer recognised at a single stroke his own needless degradation, and the total downfall of the magnificent palace he had been rearing for an hour or two on such an airy basis. In a second the illusion was utterly dispelled. Space shrank once more like an empty bladder to its normal dimensions. The mountains fell slowly into long flat Downs. The colour faded from earth and sky. The sea subsided to its natural level. The perspective of the world restored itself at once in all its ordinary meanness. And Linnell the mysterious stood revealed before him after all as a mere hard-working, penniless, struggling painter, with nothing but the chances of his heart to subsist upon. Not such the dream he had cherished for Psyche. She must marry someone who could keep her at least in modest luxury—or else cling to the ruin.

'Then — you — have — no — means?' he gasped out slowly, clutching the stem of the elder-bush at his side for support, and gazing hard into the painter's face.

'Miss Dumaresq would not ask for money,' Linnell replied with an evasive smile.

The old man's face fell slowly.

'Have you nearly finished your picture?' he asked at last in a very quiet voice.

With a start of unwelcome surprise, Linnell divined his meaning at once. But he repressed his feelings.

'Another day will finish it,' he answered in the self-same unemotional tone, as coldly as the philosopher himself had spoken.

'That is well. Come to-morrow and get it finished,' Haviland Dumaresq said with reluctant determination.

Linnell bowed.

'And after that?' he asked, looking hard into the old man's face.

'And after that,' Dumaresq answered, leaning forward apologetically, 'I think, for Psyche's sake, for all our sakes—it would be better she and you should not meet again. Ah yes, I pain you! You fancy I'm hard. You fancy I'm cruel. That's just because I'm really so tender. I feel it my duty to guard my daughter from the bare chance of misery, poverty, drudgery. Drudgery! I know what it means, my friend. For a man, those things are easy enough to bear; but for a woman—tenderly, delicately nurtured—how could I expose her to them? I must not: I cannot. I've gained experience myself on my path through life. I paid for it dear. Psyche shall have the benefit of it for nothing. No penniless man shall drag her down, down, down, to a wretched struggle with sordid poverty. Psyche is beautiful; Psyche is intelligent; Psyche is animated; Psyche is clever. She has been much admired. She's reaching the age when a girl should come out. If I take her to London—and I'd work my fingers to the bone to do it—she can mix in society and meet the sort of man she ought to meet with. I may be poor, but I'm not unknown. My name is worth much. I can get introductions, invitations, acquaintances for Psyche. Once seen in London, she's sure to marry, and to marry as she ought. I must guard her for the present from throwing away her life for a future of drudgery.'

'I see,' Linnell answered bitterly. 'You think the world's wisdom for women is summed up in that one short phrase—to marry well—do you?'

'You say it yourself,' Dumaresq answered oracularly. '*You* say it, not *I*. But perhaps you're right, after all. To marry well! It means what the wisdom of the world has made it mean—to marry where the means of happiness are best forthcoming.' He said it musingly.

Linnell bowed his head once more in solemn acquiescence. 'I may see Miss Dumaresq to-morrow?' he asked after a pause.

'You may come in and finish your picture, of course. That's mere common justice. Take as many days as you find needful to finish it. I wouldn't waste so much valuable work for worlds by curtailing in any way your opportunities for completing it.'

'And I may see her *alone?*' the painter asked again, trembling.

Dumaresq hesitated. 'Yes, you may see her alone,' he answered after a moment's consideration; 'but you know my views, and as a man of honour, you will not try to take advantage, I'm sure, of the permission—I may even say the concession I make to you. You will not incite a girl of seventeen to differ from her own father on an important matter affecting her future. I allow you to see her only because it's possible you may have already said things to her you would now wish to withdraw or to explain away. I rely upon your sense of honour for the rest.' He faltered for a moment with a sudden servile air. 'I'm an old man,' he repeated once more, almost humbly; 'I only want to make Psyche happy.'

The last two sentences were plaintively said. They touched Linnell somehow, in spite of himself. 'Very well,' he replied; you may rely upon me, then.' He looked at him fixedly. 'I have come to the age of disillusionments,' he went on; 'but no disillusion I've ever had in all my life was half so bitter as this of to-day's has been. I have seen with my own eyes a king of men dethroned from his high seat—a prince of thinkers lowered from his pinnacle to the level of the commonest and vulgarest humanity. But for the sake of what you have said, I will spare you more. Miss Dumaresq shall never marry a penniless painter.'

'Oh, remember, it's for her sake,' the old man cried appealingly, wringing his hands, and now unstrung by the sudden collapse of the opium-ecstasy. 'It's for *her* sake, remember! Don't be too hard upon me, I beseech you, Linnell. She's very young: I must guard her youth, her ignorance, her innocence. I would be doing wrong as a father if I didn't preserve her from the fatal consequences of her own impetuousness, as we take

away knives from very young children. It's my duty to guide her by my elder experience. Many a woman who herself married for love at twenty—and led a life of hopeless drudgery—regrets it enough when she's reached fifty to make her daughters marry better than she did. The world knows best: the world knows best: it's wiser by far than any one of its component members.'

'Good-bye,' Linnell answered, rising up with an effort from the dreary bank. 'I'll call in to finish the picture at ten to-morrow.'

'At ten to-morrow!' Haviland Dumaresq repeated in a dreamy voice. 'At ten to-morrow! Good-bye for the present, then. It's for Psyche's sake. At ten to-morrow.'

And sinking down on the bank, when Linnell was gone, he buried his face in his hands like a child and sobbed bitterly. 'I hope I've done right,' he cried to himself in his profound despair; 'I hope I've done right. Perhaps I'm wrong. But I never could sell my Psyche to a life of drudgery!'

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PARSON IN NORTHUMBERLAND.

Linnell, for his part, had made his mind up at once: Psyche Dumaresq should never marry a penniless painter. But unless she was ready to marry a penniless painter, father or no father to the contrary notwithstanding—unless she was ready to forsake all and follow the man of her choice willingly, to poverty or riches, she was not the girl he imagined her to be; and dearly as the wrench would cost him now, he would go away the very next evening, and never again set eyes on Psyche. Not, indeed, that Linnell had any doubt whatsoever in his own mind upon that score. He had never felt before how deeply he loved Psyche—how profoundly and implicitly he trusted her instincts. He knew she could never habour so mercenary a thought in her pure little soul as that fallen idol, her unworthy father. He knew she would take him, money or no money. He knew that

there he could never be mistaken. He had watched her daily, he repeated to himself once more in the words of the ballad, a little altered, and he *knew* she loved him well. If he went to Psyche to-morrow, and asked her plainly, 'Will you marry a penniless painter who loves you from the bottom of his heart?' he felt sure she would answer with her own sweet, innocent, guileless boldness, 'I will gladly;' and he would love her all the better for that naïve frankness.

To do that would be no real breach of the virtual promise he had made her father; for was he not rich? Was he not well-born? Would he not make her supremely happy? Would he not be keeping the spirit of his bond by thus evading it in the outer letter? He said to himself 'Yes' to that question ten thousand times over, as he walked home alone across the breezy Downs to the Red Lion, with the keen wind blowing fresh against his flushed hot face, and the blood running warm in his tingling cheeks at the memory of that hideous unsought interview.

Not that he really meant thus to break even the letter of his bond with Haviland Dumaresq. Oh no; he needed no such overt trial of his beautiful Psyche's fidelity as that. He could trust her implicitly, implicitly, implicitly. Besides, the trial would be taken out of his hands. Dumaresq would go home full of his discovery, his miserable discovery that Linnell was nothing but a common artist — a painter by trade — a journeyman colour-monger. The sordid philosopher, that mistaken father, would tell Psyche more or less directly the result of his own unspeakable inquiries: he would warn her against listening to that penniless young man; he would talk to her the common stereotyped cant of worldly-wise paternity: he would sink the brain that conceived the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy' to the miserable level of the Maitland intelligence.

Linnell could hear in his ears even now the echoes of that hideous unholy cant—'they were dangerous guides, the feelings,' and so forth, and so forth, *usque ad nauseam*, as though Haviland Dumaresq, a prophet born, had consented to dwell in his old age in the coasts of the

Philistines. He could hear the greatest thinker of our time, in that sad dotage of his, 'with a little hoard of maxims preaching down a daughter's heart!' Oh, heavens! It was incredible, it was loathsome, but it was nevertheless true. He hardly knew how to believe it himself, but he admitted it grudgingly to his own soul: Haviland Dumaresq had feet of clay, and the feet of clay had tottered to their fall in these last stages of a once mighty intellect.

But Psyche? Ah, well! He had no fear at all in his heart for Psyche. He could never conceive his own beautiful, free, great-hearted Psyche 'puppet to her father's threats, or servile to a shrewish tongue.' He knew what Psyche would do; he knew it perfectly. Psyche would burst in upon him to-morrow morning, when he called round to finish her father's picture, and flinging all conventional restrictions to the four winds of heaven—rules like those were not for such as Psyche—would cast herself upon him with a wild emotion, clasp her arms around his neck in a torrent of joy, and cry aloud that, rich or poor, come what might, she loved him, she loved him. Or, if Psyche didn't do that—for, after all, a maiden is a maiden still—at least he would see, from the timid and tearful way she greeted him, that she at any rate was wholly unchanged by anything her father might have said to her overnight against a penniless lover. She would treat him more kindly and tenderly than ever; she would say by her actions, if not by her words, 'I would love you still, though you had no roof to cover you.' That was how a girl like Psyche ought to feel and act; and because he knew *she* would feel and act so, he loved her, he loved her. In Psyche's presence he was no longer shy. Perfect love casteth out fear. Psyche would never be bent aside by such base considerations as swayed that clay-footed idol, her father. The grand incorruptible Haviland Dumaresq of former days, that was dead now in the old man's shrunken and shrivelled soul, lived still in the purer and nobler nature of his spotless daughter.

And then, when Psyche had thus proved herself worthy of her high lineage—for what lineage, after all,

could be higher in any real scale of worth than direct descent from the greatest and deepest of modern thinkers?—he would clasp her to his breast in an ecstasy of passion, and tell her plainly, what he had never yet told any living being, that the sacrifice she thought she was making for his sake had no existence; that all her father asked for her she should freely enjoy—that money, position, respect, should be hers—that *she* should be everything he himself had never been. For Linnell was rich, if it came to that; from Haviland Dumaresq's point of view quite fabulously rich; wealthy beyond the utmost dreams of Dumaresquian avarice: and if for some quixotic fad of his own he had chosen so long to give up the money that was rightly his due to the service of others, and to live entirely on his artistic earnings, he would not consider himself bound any longer to continue his obedience to that self-inflicted, self-denying ordinance, when he had a wife's happiness to consult and to provide for—and that wife his own matchless Psyche. He was rich; and he stood next heir in blood to an English baronetcy. Many things had conspired to make the shrinking, sensitive painter feel the importance of his own position far less acutely than most men would have done; but that was no reason why others should not value it at the current valuation of such things in the world of England. He could go to Haviland Dumaresq, if need were, and say to him honestly with unblushing pride: 'The penniless painter has asked your daughter's hand in marriage, and has been duly accepted. But the man who marries her is rich beyond the furthest you ever demanded from your daughter's suitors, and belongs to one of the oldest and most distinguished families in all England.' It was horrible, indeed, to think of coupling such a base and vulgar thought as that with the honoured name of Haviland Dumaresq; but if Haviland Dumaresq had in point of fact sunk so low, Linnell would meet him on his own new level, and ask him still for his guileless Psyche.

With such thoughts as these whirling fast in his brain, the painter strolled back to the village inn, the air all full of Psyche, Psyche, Psyche. As he passed the Mansels',

he caught, through the hedge, the gleam of a rustling white summer dress, and overheard the tones of a most educated voice, which he recognised at once as the final flower of Girtonian culture. He hoped Mrs. Mansel would let him pass by without calling him in, for he was in small humour that day to discuss the relative merits of Wagner and Mendelssohn, or to give his opinion in set epigrammatic phrase on the latest development of the subjective novel. But Mrs. Mansel spied him out with keen vision as he passed the gate, and came over with her sweetly subdued smile, in a Greek-looking robe looped up with an old gold oriental scarf, to call him for colloquy into her most cultivated garden. The *Academy* and *Mind* lay beside the learned lady's vacant place on the rustic seat, but in her hand she held coquettishly that far more mundane journal, the *Morning Post*. Curiosity survives as a maternal legacy even in the most highly-strung of the daughters of Eve; and Mrs. Mansel's curiosity was now at boiling-point.

'Oh, Mr. Linnell,' she cried with unwonted eagerness, 'I'm so glad you've come! I've been longing to see you. I wanted to ask you something *so* important. *Have* you any relations living in Northumberland?'

The question fell upon Linnell's ear like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. He hadn't the slightest idea in his own mind what on earth Mrs. Mansel could mean. But glancing hastily at her finger on the open page, the thought occurred to him with lightning rapidity that perhaps his half-brother Frank had just got married. That was the secret, then, of Sir Austen's desire to have the question of the succession settled upon a firm and secure basis before he left England! Linnell hesitated a fraction of a moment; then he answered doubtfully: 'I believe there's one member of my family living there at present. But I know very little of him. I've never seen him. To tell you the truth, our family relations haven't been always quite what you could call cordial.'

'A clergyman?' Mrs. Mansel asked with her soft low voice.

'A clergyman, yes,' Linnell made answer, bewildered. 'Is there anything about him in the paper to-day, then?'

'Oh, I felt sure he must be one of your family,' Mrs. Mansel cried, still holding that tantalizing sheet tightly in her small white hand. 'The name's Francis Austen Linnell, you see, and I recognised him, as I recognised you, by the peculiar spelling of the name Austen.'

'We're all of us Austens,' Linnell answered with a short, uneasy laugh. 'It's a point of honour with every Linnell I ever heard of to continue the family tradition in that respect. It's gone on in an unbroken line, I believe, since the time of Charles the Second; and it'll go on still, till baronetcies are as extinct as dodos and megatheriums. But may I ask what my respected namesake's been doing at all to get himself mentioned in the *Morning Post?* Up to date, I can't say I ever remember any performance of his, except his birth, being thought worth recording in a London newspaper.'

'Like Mark Twain's hero,' Mrs. Mansel suggested with a musical little laugh, 'who up to the age of seventy-five years had never shown any remarkable talent—and never showed any afterward: so that when he died, ill-natured people said he'd done it on purpose to gain notoriety.'

'Died!' Linnell exclaimed, holding out his hand incredulously for the paper. 'You don't mean to say Frank's dead, do you?'

'Oh yes, I forgot to say it's his death that comes next by way of record,' Mrs. Mansel went on with serene composure. 'In fact, of course, I took it for granted you'd have seen the announcement somewhere already. No, not in the Births, Marriages, and Deaths: it's later than that. See, there's the place: "Appalling Catastrophe on the Great Northern Railway."'

Linnell took the paper from her hand with trembling fingers and ran his eye hastily down the lengthy telegram. 'As the 6.45 night express was steaming out of Doncaster yesterday evening' . . . 'goods-waggons laden with heavy pig-iron' . . . 'both trains were completely telescoped' . . . 'harrowing scenes among the dead and wounded' . . . 'the following bodies have already been identified' . . . 'The Rev. Francis Austen Linnell, Vicar of Hambledon-cum-Thornyhaugh, Northumberland.'

He handed back the paper, very white in the face, to Mrs. Mansel. It was clear that the news profoundly affected him.

'Why, Mr. Linnell, I didn't know you were so much interested in the man,' the learned lady cried, astonished and penitent. 'If I'd thought you were so deeply concerned as that, I'd have broken it gently to you—indeed I would. Was he such a very near relation, then?'

'He was only—my brother,' Linnell answered with a gasp. He had never seen him; but blood is thicker than water, after all. A nameless shock seemed to run through his system. Two thoughts came uppermost in the painter's mind amid the whirl of emotion that those words had brought upon him. The first was a sense of profound thankfulness that he had written and posted that letter to Sir Austen before he knew of his brother's sudden death. The second was the idea that even Haviland Dumaresq would now no doubt be satisfied to accept as Psyche's husband the heir-presumptive to an English baronetcy, who had no longer any reason for concealing his position and prospects from the world in deference to the feelings of an illegitimate relative.

CHAPTER XIV.

RACK AND THUMBSCREW.

HAVILAND DUMARESQ sat long on the bank, with his head in his hands, sobbing like a child. Then he rose wearily, and plodded home alone, his head aching and his heart heavy at the downfall of that mad momentary opium dream for his beloved Psyche.

Without and within, indeed, the day had changed. Dull weather was springing up slowly from the west, where the sun had buried itself behind a rising fog bank. The philosopher made his way, with stumbling steps, across the open Downs—those prosaic Downs so lately mountains—and lifting the latch of the garden gate, entered the house and walked aimlessly into his bare little study.

A dozen books lay open on the plain deal table—books of reference for the subject at which he was just then working—a series of papers on mathematical and astronomical questions for the 'Popular Instructor.' He sat down in his place and tried to compose. It was for bread, for bread, for bread, for Psyche. But even that strong accustomed spur could not goad him on to work this dreary afternoon. He gazed vacantly at the accusing sheet of virgin-white foolscap: not a thought surged up in that teeming brain; not a picture floated before those dim inner eyes; he couldn't fix himself for a moment upon the declination of Alpha Centauri: with all the universe of stars and nebulæ and constellations and systems careering madly in wild dance around him to the music of the spheres, his mind came back ever to one insignificant point in space, on the surface of that petty planet he so roundly despised—the point occupied by a tiny inconspicuous organic result of cosmic energies, by name Psyche. At last he flung down his pen in despair, and opening the door half ajar in his hand, called up the stairs to her, 'Psyche, Psyche, Psyche!'

'Yes, papa,' Psyche answered, jumping up at the call from the tiny couch in her own bedroom, and running down the steep and narrow cottage staircase. 'You weren't in for lunch. I was so sorry. You've had one of those horrid headaches again, I'm sure. I can tell it by your eyes. I see the pupils look so big and heavy.'

Haviland Dumaresq drew one palm across his forehead, and gazed hard at his daughter's eyes in return. Though she had bathed them well in cold water, they still bore evident traces of crying.

'My darling,' he said, laying his hand on her shoulder with tender care, and drawing her over caressingly to the one armchair in that bare little workshop, 'something's been troubling *you* too. You're not yourself at all to-day, I can see. You look pale and troubled. Psyche, we two have never had secrets from one another up to this: don't let's begin to have any now. Tell me what it is. Tell me what's worrying my little daughter.' He spoke wistfully.

Psyche gazed up at him half doubtful for a moment; then she answered with a flush:

'You can read everything. You know already what it is, father.'

Dumaresq, trembling, took her little hand in his and stroked it tenderly.

'We must expect it so now,' he said in an undertone, as if half to himself, with dreamy persistence—'we must expect it so now, I suppose: the Epoch has come for it. In the essentially artificial state of society in which we human atoms now live and move and have our being, feelings that are natural at certain turns of life as song to the bird or play to the kitten must be sternly repressed at Society's bidding; and they can only be suppressed by being turned inward; they must find vent at last, if in nothing else, in these hysterical longings, and tears, and emotions. I must expect them all, no doubt; I must expect these outbursts. But it's hard to see them, for all that, however inevitable. My little girl has been crying—alone. It wrings my heart to see her eyes so red. Psyche, Psyche, you must try to dismiss it.'

'I can't,' Psyche answered, making no attempt to conceal the subject that floated uppermost in both their thoughts. Father and daughter were too nearly akin to allow of any flimsy pretences between them. 'I can't dismiss it—and, papa, I don't want to.'

'Not for *my* sake, Psyche?' he asked sadly.

The girl rose, the peach-blossom flush in her cheek now more crimson than ever, and flinging herself wistfully on her father's shoulder, answered without faltering, or sobbing, or crying:

'Anything but *that*, father; anything on earth but that; for your sake, anything; but *that*, never!'

The old man disengaged her softly from his neck, and seating her down in the big arm-chair, where she let her face hang, all shame and blushes, without venturing to raise her eyes to his, surveyed her long and anxiously in pitying silence. Then he cried at last, clasping his hands tight:

'I didn't think it had gone as far as *this*, my darling. If I'd dreamt it was going as far as this, I'd have spoken and warned you long ago, Psyche!'

'It hasn't gone far at all, papa,' Psyche answered

truthfully. 'It hasn't begun even. It's all within. I don't so much as know'—she paused for a moment, then she added in a very low tone, tremulously—'whether he cares the least little bit in the world for me.'

'It *has* gone far,' the old man corrected with a very grave air: 'far, far, too far—in your heart, Psyche. And your own heart is all I care about. I ought to have foreseen it. I ought to have suspected it. I ought to have guarded my treasure, my beautiful treasure in an earthen vessel, far more carefully. What matters is not whether *he* cares for you, but that you should care at all for *him*, my darling.'

Psyche looked down and answered nothing.

'You think yourself in love with him,' her father went on, accenting the *think* with a marked emphasis.

'I never said so,' Psyche burst out, half defiantly.

Dumaresq took a little wooden chair from the corner by the window, and drawing it over by Psyche's side, seated himself close to her and laid her passive hand in his with fatherly gentleness. Psyche's blank eyes looked straight in front of her. The philosopher, gazing down, hesitated and reflected half a minute. Stars and worlds are such calculable bodies to deal with: they move along such exactly measurable orbits: but a woman!—who shall tell what attractions and repulsions deflect her from her course? who shall map out her irregular and irresponsible movements? And since the last six weeks or so, Psyche was a woman. She had found out her own essential womanhood with a burst, as girls of her type always do—at the touch of a man's hand. Her father gazed at her in doubt. How to begin his needful parable?

At last words came. 'My darling,' he said very slowly and gravely, 'you are all I have left to care for in the world, and I love you, Psyche, as no man ever yet loved his daughter. You are all the world to me, and the rest is nothing. Looking back upon my own past life, I don't attempt to conceal from myself for a moment the fact that, as a man, I have been a failure—an utter failure. The failure was a splendid one, I frankly admit; nay, more, perhaps, a failure worth making—for one man,

once in the world's history—but none the less, for all that, an utter failure. No, don't interrupt me, my child, for I know what I'm saying. Am I a man to palter with the truth or to hide from myself my own great weaknesses? Have I not taken my own gauge like all other gauges—accurately and dispassionately? From beginning to end, my life has been all wrong; an error from the outset: like the universe itself, a magnificent blunder. Not that I regret it; I regret nothing. I am myself, not any other. I must follow out the law of my own being unopposed, though it bring me in the end nothing but blank disappointment.'

He paused a moment, and ran his hand abstractedly through her long fair hair: then he went on again in a soft musing undertone: 'But you, Psyche, it is for you to profit by my sad experience. I have learnt once for all, myself vicariously for all our race—learnt in a hard school, a hard lesson, to be transmitted from me to every future Dumaresq, for individuality runs too strong in the current of our blood—learnt that the world is right, and that the individual does unwisely and ill to cast himself away for the sake of humanity. Humanity will owe him no thanks for his sacrifice. My child, I want you to be happy—happy—happier far than ever I have been. I could never bear to see you condemned to a life of drudgery. I want *you* to be all that I have missed. I want *you* to be what I could never have been. I want you to be comfortable—at your ease—happy.'

Psyche caught at his meaning by pure hereditary sympathy. She glanced back at him with her proud free face, tenderly, indeed, but almost reproachfully. How could *he* ever think it of her? 'Papa,' she said in a very firm voice, 'I am *your* daughter. Individuality, as you say, runs strong in the blood. As *you* are, I am. But being the actual man you are yourself—why, how can you ever expect your daughter to be any otherwise?'

'You despise money too much, Psyche,' the old man said, in a tone of conviction.

'Do *you* despise it?' Psyche answered simply with a straight home-thrust. 'Papa, you know you do—as much as I do.'

Haviland Dumaresq's lips half relaxed in spite of himself. 'True,' he replied; 'very true, little one. But then I'm a man. I can bear all that—poverty, drudgery, misery. I know what it means. Whereas *you*, my darling——'

'I—am your daughter,' Psyche repeated proudly.

'Then you mean,' her father said in a heart-broken voice, 'that if he asks you, you mean to marry Mr. Linnell?'

'He hasn't asked me,' Psyche answered with a deeper flush.

'But if he does, Psyche—my darling, my daughter, promise me, oh! promise me, that you'll give him no answer till you've spoken to me about it.'

Psyche looked him back in the eyes sorrowfully. 'I can't,' she answered, faltering. 'Oh, anything but that, papa! I didn't know it myself even till you began to ask me. But I know it now. I love him, I love him too dearly.'

Dumaresq looked at her with melting regret. 'My child,' he said, faltering in his turn, 'you will break my heart for me. Psyche, I've had but one day-dream in my life—one long day-dream that I've cherished for years for you. I've seen you growing up and unfolding like a flower-bud, becoming every day sweeter and daintier and more beautiful than ever, flitting like a butterfly through this dull gray life of mine—and I've said to myself in my own heart: "If I've nothing else to give my child, I can give her at least the dower of being Haviland Dumaresq's only daughter. I can introduce her to a world where my name at any rate counts for something. There she will be noticed, admired, courted: there her beautiful face and her beautiful soul will both be rated at their true value. There some man who is worthy of her, by birth and position, will make her happy, as she richly deserves to be." I saw you in my own mind surrounded by comfort, honour, luxury. That was my day-dream, Psyche, the only day-dream of my sad long life. Don't break it down ruthlessly for me, I beseech you, by marrying a penniless man, who will drag you, by slow degrees of decline, down, down, down, to poverty, drudgery, wretchedness, misery. Don't let

me see you a pale, careworn wife, harassed with debt, and many children, and endless rounds of household worries. Don't break my heart by spoiling your own life for me. Oh, for my sake, Psyche, promise me, do promise me, for the present to say "*No*" to him.'

'Papa, papa,' Psyche cried, 'you've said it yourself; if you've nothing else on earth to give me, you've given me the dower of being Haviland Dumaresq's daughter. I've always been proud of your own grand life, and of the way you've flung it so grandly away for humanity. Do you think I'm not proud enough to fling my own away too—for love? I'd rather bear drudgery with the one man I care for, than share wealth and position and titles and honours with any other man in all England.'

Her father gazed down at her with remorseful eyes. He was proud of her, but heart-broken. 'You're very young, Psyche,' he murmured again, holding both her hands in his, and pleading hard for his day-dream. You're only beginning your course through life. You'll meet many other men in your way through the world whom you can love as truly as you love Linnell. This is but the first slight scratch. Don't fancy, as girls will do, it's the deepest of wounds, the one grand passion. You'll find penniless young painters are as plentiful as blackberries on your path through life. I've seen women marry before now for pure, pure love, and marry a man who loved them truly; yet lead such lives, such unhappy lives of sordid shifts and squalid household tasks, that all the romance—yes, and all the health and strength and spirit too—was crushed clean out of them. Don't rush headlong at once on such a fate as that. Wait awhile, my child; I ask you no more: just a brief delay: wait and make your mind up.'

He meant it in the kindest possible way—the way of fathers; but he had mistaken his hearer. Psyche looked up at him with a great fact dawning ever clearer on her half-childish understanding. She had realized it but dimly and uncertainly before; she saw it now, under stress of opposition, in all its vivid and undeniable distinctness.

'Papa,' she cried, with profound conviction, 'I may

wait and wait, as long as you like, but I shall love him for ever, and him only.'

He had forced it out of her. He had forced it into her almost. Without the spur of his searching question, she could never have put it so plainly, even to herself. But she knew it now. She was quite certain of it. She saw it as a simple fact of Nature. She loved Linnell, and she was not ashamed of it. She had forgotten by this time all her girlish bashfulness—her modesty—her reserve—and she looked her father full in the face as she repeated fervently: 'I love him! I love him!'

The old man flung himself back in his chair with a groan.

'Psyche, Psyche,' he cried, 'you'll kill me—you'll kill me! Was it for this I longed and dreamed in secret? Was it for this I worked and flung my life away? You'll bring down my gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. To see you drudging as a poor man's slave in some wretched lodging! For your father's sake, oh, take pity on yourself—refuse him, refuse him!'

'I can't,' Psyche answered firmly—'I can't do it, papa. My tongue wouldn't obey me. He hasn't asked me yet, and for your sake I hope he won't ask me; but if he does, I can't refuse him; I must say "*Yes;*" I can never say "No" to him.'

Her father rocked himself to and fro in his chair in speechless misery. If Psyche were to marry that penniless painter he would feel that his life was indeed a failure. His house would in truth be left unto him desolate. The ground would be cut from under his very feet. He had dreamed his dream of happiness for Psyche so long that he had come to live on it now altogether. It was his future, his world, his one interest in existence. It had intertwined itself alike in his opium ecstasies and in his soberer, saner, waking hours, till each form of the dream had only seemed to heighten and fortify the other. And now Psyche, for whose sake he had dreamt it all, was going herself deliberately to crush his hopes under foot by flinging herself away, and accepting that penniless, struggling painter.

He rocked himself to and fro in his chair with tears in

his eyes. They rolled slowly down his weather-beaten cheek, and Psyche, watching them, let her own keep them company in solemn silence. One heart or the other must surely break. Which heart should it be? that was the question. Big drops stood upon the old man's brow. It was clear the disappointment wrung his very soul. The opium-fever made him see things ever in extremes. If Linnell wasn't rich, then Linnell was a beggar, and would drag down his Psyche to the grave or the workhouse. His agony stood out visibly in every line of his face. At last Psyche could stand the sight no longer. She flung herself upon him with tears and sobs.

'Papa,' she cried piteously, 'my dear, darling father; I love you, I love you, very, very dearly!'

'I know it, Psyche,' the old man answered in heart-broken tones, with his hand on his heart—'I know it; I know it.'

'Ask me anything but that, papa,' Psyche burst out, all penitent, 'and I'll gladly do it.'

The philosopher smoothed her fair hair with his hand.

'Psyche,' he murmured once more, after a long pause, 'he's coming to-morrow to finish the picture. After that, I believe, he's not coming again. I think—he's going away altogether from Petherton.'

Psyche's face was as white as a ghost's.

'Well, papa?' she asked, in a voice that trembled audibly with a quivering tremor.

'Well, I want you to do one thing for me,' her father went on, 'one thing only. I won't ask you to give him up: not to give him up entirely. I see that's more than I could ask of you at present. The wound has gone too deep for the moment. But young hearts heal much faster than old ones. I do ask you, therefore, to wait and think. Remember how young you are! You're only seventeen. In four years more you'll be your own mistress. If in four years from now you love Linnell still, and he loves you still, then well and good—though it break my heart, I will not oppose you. Even now, my darling, I do not oppose you. I only say to you—and I beg of you—I implore you—wait and try him.'

Psyche looked back at him, cold and white as marble.

'I will wait, papa,' she answered, in a very clear voice. 'I can wait, if you wish it. I can wait, and wait, and wait for ever. But, four years or forty years, I shall always love him.'

Dumaresq smiled. That's the way with the young. The present love is to them always the unalterable one.

'If you'll wait for my sake,' he said, holding her hand tight, 'I'll let you do as you will in four short years. In three years, even, I'll give you law. You're young, very young. I never thought these things had come near you yet. If I had thought so, I'd have guarded you better, far better. But I want you to promise me now one other thing—say nothing of all this to Linnell to-morrow.'

'Papa!' Psyche cried, rising in her horror, 'am I to let him go away without even saying good-bye to him? without bidding him farewell? without telling him how sorry I am to lose him, and why—why I must be so terribly different now to him? Suppose he asks me, what must I answer him?'

'My child,' the old man said in a soothing voice, 'he will *not* ask you. He'll pass it by in silence. But for my sake, I beg you, I beseech you, I implore you—try to say nothing to him. Let him go in peace. Oh, Psyche, don't break my poor old heart for me outright! I'm an old man—a broken-down man. If I have time, perhaps I may get over this blow. But give me time! I'm very feeble—worn out before my day. Let him go to-morrow without telling your whole heart to him.'

Psyche stood still and answered nothing.

'Will you?' her father asked once more imploringly.

Psyche, white as a sheet, still held her peace.

'For Heaven's sake, promise,' the old man cried again, with an agonized look. It was crushing his heart. He couldn't bear to think that Linnell should drag her down to those imagined depths of Bohemian poverty.

The poor girl gazed at him with a fixed, cold face. She looked more like a marble statue than a human figure as she stood there irresolute. The heart within her was divided two ways, and frozen hard with horror. But her father's attitude moved her to despair. He was

an old man, as he said, and to refuse him now would clearly be his death-warrant.

'I promise,' she murmured slowly, and stood there rooted. Three years, three years — three long, long years! and she dared not even so much as tell him.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE CRUCIBLE.

At ten o'clock next morning, according to promise, Linnell presented himself at the Wren's Nest. He was pale and anxious, for he had passed a long and sleepless night —who knows not those sleepless nights, more precious by far than sleep itself, when a man's head whirls round and round with a thousand tunes played deliciously on a single chord?—but he was not in the least afraid of the result, for he could trust Psyche: though Haviland Dumaresq himself might fade at nearer view into common humanity, he could trust Psyche—he could trust Psyche! How often did he not murmur to himself reassuringly through the night-watches that, let who would fail, he could still trust Psyche! So he pulled himself together with what energy he might, and went round betimes to finish the portrait.

Psyche, too, for her part, was pale and agitated; but she was far too much of a woman already to let her devoted admirer plainly see it. She, too, had lain awake on her bed all night, not in the sleepless ecstasy of love like Linnell, but crying her eyes out in a fierce conflict of counter-emotions. Till yesterday she hardly knew she loved her painter; but we often learn what we love best only at the moment when we are called upon to give it up. Now that she was asked to relinquish all thoughts of loving Linnell, Psyche felt to herself for the first time how her whole future had unconsciously wrapped itself up in him. She had cried and cried till her eyes were sore and red; at least, for the first half of that long lone night. But about three o'clock the woman within her suggested suddenly that if she went on crying any longer

like this, Linnell would detect those red eyes in the morning. So she rose up hastily and bathed them with rose-water; and after a long time spent in reducing the swollen lids to proper proportions, went to bed once more with a stern resolve not to cry again to-night, no matter what cruel thought might present itself to her. And she kept the resolve with innate firmness. She was Haviland Dumaresq's daughter, after all, and she knew how to control her own heart sternly. Let it throb as it would, she would keep it quiet. Her pride itself would never permit her to let her father or her lover see to-morrow she had shed a tear over this her first great sorrow.

So, when Linnell presented himself in the bare little dining-room at ten o'clock, Psyche was there, fresh and smiling as usual, to meet him and greet him with undisturbed calmness. Fresh and smiling as usual, but somehow changed, Linnell felt instinctively: not quite herself: some shadow of a thick impenetrable barrier seemed to have risen up invisible since yesterday between them. Could it be that Psyche too—— But no! impossible! Linnell dashed away the unworthy thought, half ashamed of himself for allowing it to obtrude its horrid face for one moment upon him. Such motives could never weigh with Psyche. Though Haviland Dumaresq had wallowed in mire, his Psyche could never soil the tip of her white little wings in it.

She held out her hand and took his with a smile. But her grasp had none of that gentle pressure he had learnt to expect of late from Psyche; that cordial pressure, unfelt and undesigned, which all of us give to friends and intimates. A man so sensitive and so delicately organized as Linnell felt the difference at once: he felt it, and it chilled him. 'Good-morning,' he said in a disappointed voice: 'we can go on at once, I suppose, with the picture.'

'Yes,' Psyche answered in tones she could hardly school herself to utter. 'It'll be finished to-day, I suppose, Mr. Linnell? Papa told me you thought you'd only want one more day for it.'

The artist looked at her with a keen and piercing

glance. Was even his faith in Psyche, then, to be shaken? Would Psyche herself have nothing more to say to the penniless painter? He wouldn't believe it—he couldn't believe it. 'Yes, one more day,' he answered, 'and then we shall be done. It's been a pleasant task, Miss Dumaresq. I'm sorry it's finished. We've enjoyed it together.'

'The picture's beautiful,' Psyche answered, trembling, but trying to talk as coldly as she could. She had given her word to papa last night, and bitter as it might be, she would do the best she knew to fulfil it. But, oh, how much easier it was to promise last night—though that itself was hard—than to carry the promise into execution this morning!

'I'm glad you like it,' Linnell went on, making up his mind not to notice her tone—a man may so readily misinterpret mere tones: 'I never pleased myself better before; but then, I never had so suitable a sitter.'

'Thank you,' Psyche answered with well-assumed calmness: 'it's a pleasure to me if I've been able to be of any service to you.'

Linnell looked back at her in surprise and alarm. His heart was beating very fast now. There could be no mistaking the frigidity of her tone. Impossible, incredible, inconceivable as it seemed, Psyche must have found out he wasn't worth catching.

His hand could hardly guide his brush aright, but he went on painting through that whole long morning—the longest and most terrible he had ever known—with the energy of despair increasing and deepening upon him each moment. They talked continually—talked far more than usual; for each of them felt too constrained and unhappy to let the conversation flag for a single moment. Silence in such a case would be worse than unsafe: only by a strenuous stream of platitudinous commonplaces can the overflowing heart be held back at a crisis from unseemly self-revelation. Linnell talked about the picture, and its effect: Psyche answered him back bravely with polite phrases. Her courage never failed or flinched for a second: though she broke her heart over it, she would keep her word to the letter to her father.

After all, it was only for three long years: an eternity of time when one's seventeen; but still an eternity with limits beyond it. Some day, some day, she could explain it all to him. Some day she could tell him with a bursting heart how much she had endured, and for his dear sake. For he loved her, he loved her; of that she was certain. His hand was trembling on the canvas as he worked; till then, poor fluttering heart, lie still. Some day you may burst your self-imposed barriers, and let your pent-up love flow down its natural channel.

Once or twice, however, the pressure was terrible. Once or twice the tears rose almost to the level of her eyes; but each time, with a superhuman effort of will, like her father's daughter, she thrust them back again. Towards the end especially, when Linnell, now thoroughly wounded in soul, began to hint at his approaching departure, the conflict within her grew painfully intense.

'I meant to spend all the summer at Petherton,' he said with a burst, looking across at her despairingly, towards the close of the sitting—'particularly once; I almost made my mind up. But circumstances have arisen which make me think it best now to go. Though, indeed, even yet I might stop—if other circumstances intervened to detain me.' He looked at her hard. She gave no sign. 'But that seems unlikely,' he went on, heart-broken. 'So I shall probably leave almost at once. Unless, indeed, anything should happen—unexpectedly—to keep me here.'

He gazed at her, despairing. Psyche faltered. The heart within her rose up and did battle. She knew what he meant. One word would suffice—one motion of the hand. Could she keep it down? Could she do her own soul—and his—this gross injustice? And then her father's pleading face occurred to her. An old, old man—a broken old man! Her father's pleading face, and her sacred promise! Her promise! her promise! Come what might, she must, she must! It was for three years only! And he—he would wait for her.

Summoning up all her courage, she answered once more in the same set tone, but with agonized eyes:

'We shall be sorry to lose you. It's been a very great pleasure to us all to see you here, Mr. Linnell, this summer.'

Linnell noticed the struggle and its result; noticed it, and—as was natural for him—misinterpreted it too. A nature like his could put but one interpretation upon it. Then she was really crushing down her own better feelings at the dictates of mere vulgar prudence and avarice! She would have liked to be cordial—to the man, to himself—modest and sensitive as he was in his heart, Linnell yet paid himself mentally the compliment of admitting so much—she liked the man; but she would make no concession to the penniless painter. He turned to his work once more with a stifled sigh of horror. He, too, had had a day-dream at last; he had thought just once, just once in the world, he had found the one true maiden to love him; and now the day-dream had melted again into airy nothingness, and the one true maiden had declared by no uncertain signs that she too preferred the worship of Mammon. Ah me! ah me! the horror of it! the pity of it!

There was a dangerous silence for half a minute. Pysche thought he must surely hear her heart as it beat with loud thuds against her trembling little bosom. At all hazards she must find something to say. She blundered in her haste and trepidation on the worst possible tack.

'But you will come again?' she murmured, almost persuasively.

Linnell looked up, and hesitated for an instant. Could she mean to relent? Was she leading him on? Never would he ask her if she took him with anything less than her whole heart, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, on his own account alone, without thought or calculation of money and position.

'A painter's life is governed by many varying conditions,' he answered slowly and very deliberately. 'We can't come and go where we will, like moneyed people. We must move where we find work cut out to our hands. Ours is a very precarious trade. We work hard, most of us, and earn little. Such people, you know, must be

guided by the market. They must govern their motions hither and thither by demand and supply—hard political economy—paint what they find the world will pay them for.'

'But you're not like that,' Psyche cried, more naturally and unconstrainedly than she had yet spoken: you're well known, and can paint what you will. Besides, you can come and go where you please. You've nobody else in the world but yourself to think of. And—it would give us all so much pleasure to see you again at Petherton.'

Her soul misgave her as she spoke. Had she gone too far? Was she breaking the spirit of her promise now? Was she moving half-way, in her eagerness, to meet the penniless painter?

Linnell, too, looked up with a fresh burst of hope, as he heard her words.

'I might come back,' he said, eyeing her once more with that piercing glance of his, 'if only—I thought—I had something to come back for.'

Psyche shook with terror and remorse from head to foot. It was an awful ordeal for so young a girl. Her father should have guarded her heart from this strain. She had gone too far, then. She had said too much. Her feelings had betrayed her. She had broken her word. Oh, what would papa say to this? She must put herself right again; she must justify her promise.

'We shall all be delighted to see you,' she said, relapsing into the same cold impersonal voice as before. 'I hope you'll come. There must be plenty of things for you still to paint here.'

Linnell turned back, unmanned, to the picture again. Then she had fought it all out with her own heart, and the worst side had won within her! How beautiful she was, and how young, and how innocent! Who could ever have believed that under that sweet and almost childish face—childish in softness, yet full of womanly grace and dignity—there lay so much cold and calculating selfishness! Who could ever have believed that that seemingly simple country girl would stifle her own better inner promptings—deliberately, visibly to the naked eye—for the sake of money, position, worldly prospects! She

would sell her own soul, then, for somebody's gold! And, oh, how futile, how empty was the sale! If she would but have loved him, how he would have loved her! And now, even now, when he saw she loved him far less than the chance of selling herself for hard cash in the matrimonial market—why he loved her, he loved her, he loved her still! The more unworthy she was, the more he loved her. But he would never tell her so. Oh, never, never! For her own dignity's sake he would never tell her. He would never degrade himself—and her—by putting her to the shame of that open renunciation of her better self. He would spare her the disgrace of belying her own heart. He would bear it all in silence. He would spare her—he would spare her.

He glanced across at her as he worked on mechanically still. A red flush stood now in the midst of her pale white cheek. She was ashamed, ashamed, of that he felt sure; but her heart was not strong enough to break through the vile bonds it had woven for itself. The Psyche he had dreamed of had never existed. But the baser Psyche that actually was he would always love. He would love her for the sake of his own sweet fancy. The ideal had made even the reality dear to him.

He painted away for some minutes in silence. Neither spoke. Psyche could not trust herself to say another word. The tears were welling up almost uncontrollably now. Linnell put touch after touch to the completed picture. Strange to say, the very power of his feeling made him paint intensely. He was surpassing himself in the exaltation of the moment. He was putting on the canvas the ideal Psyche—the Psyche that was not and never had been.

At last he drew breath, stood back, looked at it, nd sighed. 'It's finished,' he said. 'One other st oke would spoil it.'

'Finished!' Psyche cried. 'Oh, I'm *so* sorry!'

Linnell packed up his things to go, in silence. Psyche never moved from her seat, but watched him. He packed them all up with a resolute air. She knew what it meant, but brave and proud still, she kept her compact to the very letter. 'Are you—going?' she asked at last,

as he stood with the easel stuck under his arm, leaving the picture itself on the dining-room table.

'Yes, going,' he said in a very husky voice. 'It's all finished. Good-bye, Miss Dumaresq.'

'For ever!' Psyche cried, all her strength failing her.

'For ever,' Linnell answered, in choking tones. 'One word from you would have kept me, Psyche. It never came. You didn't speak it. If you spoke it now, even, it would keep me still. But you won't—you won't! You dare not speak it.'

Psyche looked up at him, one appealing glance. Her lips trembled. Her face was white as death now. 'I love you! Stop!' faltered unspoken in her parched throat. It almost burst, irrepressible, from her burning tongue. But her promise! her promise! She must keep her promise! The words died away on her bloodless lips. She only looked. She answered nothing.

With one wild impulse, before he went, Linnell seized the two white cheeks between his hands, and, stooping down, kissed the bloodless lips just once—and no more after. He knew it was wrong, but he couldn't resist it. Then he rose, and, crying in a tremulous voice, 'Good-bye, Psyche: good-bye for ever!' he rushed wildly out into the cottage garden.

Ten minutes later, when Haviland Dumaresq came into the room to see what fruit his counsel had borne, he found Psyche seated in the one armchair with her cold face buried deep in her two hands, and her bosom rising and falling convulsively.

'He's gone, papa!' she said; 'and I've kept my promise.'

CHAPTER XVI.

ON THE SPUR OF THE MOMENT.

To Linnell the blow was a very severe one. At thirty, when a man loves, he loves in earnest. No playing then with light loves in the portal: no time then to wince and relent and refrain: the wounds he gets at that age go deep and rankle. As Linnell returned to the Red Lion

that morning he felt the world was indeed a blank to him. Once only in his life had he indulged in the madness of daring to think a woman loved him: he had put that woman to the test, oh, such a tiny test! and found her wanting past all belief. Henceforth he would hold no girl a goddess. The game was played—and lost. Linnell was tired of it.

He had left the Oriental picture behind him at the Wren's Nest. The portrait of Haviland Dumaresq himself stood fronting him on the easel in his own sitting-room. It wanted several hours' work yet of its final completion. That fiery energy of despair he had felt at the cottage still possessed his soul. Seizing his palette, all on fire, and working away with a will from vivid memory one—a memory now quickened by his unnatural exaltation—Linnell proceeded to fill in the remaining details, and to place upon the canvas a breathing, speaking, living portrait of the great philosopher in his happiest aspect. It was not Dumaresq as he appeared to the artist the day before on the west cliffs—not that shattered and disappointed old man of seventy, pleading hard against his own earlier and better self for the lowest and vulgarest estimate of life—but Dumaresq as he appeared on that first glorious evening at the Wren's Nest, with the heroic air of resignation and simplicity he had worn on his face, while he told in plain unvarnished language the story of his own grand and noble devotion in the morning of his days to an impersonal cause. Linnell remembered every curve of the features, every flash of the eyes, every turn of the expression, as Dumaresq had unfolded before them in full detail that strange history of magnificent self-denial. That was the Dumaresq that should live for ever upon his earnest canvas: that was the Dumaresq whose lineaments posterity should transcribe from his hand on the title-page of five thousand future editions of the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy.' For Linnell was too single-minded in his admiration of Dumaresq to let contempt for one aspect of the man's nature interfere with appreciation for the greatness of his life-work. Let him be emotionally whatever he might, intellectually, Linnell felt sure in his own soul, Haviland Dumaresq towered

like a giant among the lesser and narrower thinkers of his age.

After three hours' hard work, he desisted at last, and, standing back in the room, gazed close with a critical eye at the portrait. His instincts told him it was a magnificent picture: he had put his very heart's blood into each stroke of the pencil. The landlady came up while he worked, and announced lunch; but Linnell would not lay aside his brush for a second till his task was done. 'Give me a glass of claret and a sandwich,' he cried hastily; and the landlady, lamenting sore that 'all them nice sweetbreads was cooked for nothing,' was fain perforce to acquiesce in his Spartan humour. But when the last touch had been put to the picture, and Dumaresq himself gazed forth from the canvas, a thinker confessed in all his greatness, Linnell stood before it with folded hands, astonished at his own unexpected force and originality. Never before in his life had he painted with all the inborn energy of his nature, unrestrained by petty fears and unworthy self-criticisms. Never before had he so trusted to his own true genius; and the result of that proud and justified confidence was apparent at a glance on the easel before him.

Women take refuge from disappointment in tears; men in action, and above all in work. The work had soothed Linnell's nerves gradually. He sat down to his desk, when the task was complete, and wrote a hasty note with trembling hands to Psyche. It was the first he had ever written to her: it would be the last—his one love-letter. And then no more hereafter, whatever might come with years.

'DEAR MISS DUMARESQ,

'I leave Petherton for ever this evening. I leave England for ever to-morrow. The Oriental picture is at the Wren's Nest. I beg you to keep it as some slight memento of me. The portrait of your father I have finished from memory this afternoon. Let it remain at the Red Lion till dry; then kindly send for it and take it home. You were quite right in thinking your father's features ought not to be lost to the world and to posterity.

That they may not be lost, I beg you to accept this faint representation of them—not wholly unworthy, I venture to believe, of the striking original—during your own lifetime, and to leave it by will at your death as a sacred trust to the National Portrait Gallery. Before this reaches you, I shall have left the inn. No answer can then find me anywhere. Good-bye for ever.

'Faithfully yours,

'C. A. L.'

He folded it up, took it out, and posted it. Then he returned, all tremulous, to the Red Lion, packed up his belongings in his little portmanteau, paid his bill, and drove down to catch the last train to London. The dream of his life was gone for ever. He didn't care much now what became of him.

At the station he jumped lightly into the first carriage he happened to see. It was almost empty, but one man sat in the far corner, looking out of the window. As the train moved out, the man turned. Linnell recognised him. It was a journalist acquaintance of other days, a man on the staff of a London daily, who acted at times as a special war correspondent.

Linnell was by no means pleased at the unexpected recognition, for he would far have preferred to be left alone and to nurse his chagrin and mortification by himself; but there was no help for it now: the journalist had seen him, and it was too late to change into another carriage. So he gulped down his regret as best he might, and said in as cheerful a voice as he could muster:

'Hullo, Considine, on the move as usual! And where are you off to?'

'Khartoum, this time,' the easy-going journalist replied jauntily. 'Hot work, too, at this time of year. I only received orders by wire to Plymouth at nine this morning, and I leave Charing Cross at nine to-morrow. But it's nothing when you're used to it. I'm all on the job, you know. Bless you! I was sent out to Zululand once, much quicker than that. Down at the office at six one evening, in comes a wire, "Troubles in Zululand." Says the chief: "Considine, me boy, you're off to Africa."

Says I: "When?" Says he: "Steamer sailed from Southampton yesterday. Go overland, and catch it at Lisbon." So off I rushed to Cannon Street in the clothes I stood up in and just managed to bundle into the night-mail, without even so much as a pocket-comb by way of luggage: bought a portmanteau and a few things I needed in a spare hour at Paris; and was at Pietermaritzburg, as fresh as a daisy, before the fighting had seriously begun on the frontier. I call that smart. But a job like this is really quite easy for me.'

'Well, but you don't know Arabic!' Linnell cried, a little taken aback.

'Arabic, is it? Sorrow a word, me dear fellow. But what of that? I've gone the world over with English alone, and as much of every native lingo I came across as will allow me to swear at the beastly niggers to the top of my wishes in their own tongue.'

Linnell looked graver.

'But you ought to know Arabic, really,' he said. 'Any man who goes to Khartoum nowadays is to some extent liable to take his life in his hands for the time being. I've been a good deal about in Africa myself, you know, and for my own part I wouldn't like to trust myself in the interior at present unless I could pass at a pinch as a decent Mohammedan. That is to say, if I valued my life—which I don't, as it happens—but that's nothing.'

'*You* speak Arabic, I suppose?' Considine said suggestively.

'Like English, almost,' the painter answered with a nod. 'I'd pass for a Mohammedan easily anywhere in Africa.'

'Shall you go out there this winter? You generally do, I recollect; and this time there'll be lots of amusement. Things are getting lively on the Upper Nile. They'll be having a row up yonder before long. I expect squalls, myself, before the winter's over, and I wouldn't be out of the fun myself for a sovereign, I can tell you.'

Linnell laughed.

'You're a born Irishman,' he answered. 'You love a fight as your countryman loves to brandish his shillelagh at Donnybrook Fair. Well, no; I hadn't de-

finitely canvassed the Nile for this next winter, I confess; but now I come to think of it, it might be worth while to see the fighting. I don't much care where I go now, and to a man who's thoroughly tired of his life, Khartoum at present offers exceptional attractions.'

'That's right, me boy,' the correspondent cried, slapping him hard on the back. 'You speak with the spirit of an officer and a gentleman. You'd better pack up your portmanteau at once, and come along off with me by the next opportunity. A man who can wear a burnous like a native and jabber Arabic's the right man for the place this blessed minute. I've got the very post in my gift to suit you. It's an artist you are, and an artist I'm looking for. The *Porte-Crayon* people are on the hunt for a fellow who can draw to go out and get himself killed at Khartoum in their service. Liberal terms: first-rate pay: a pension if wounded: a solatium for your widow if killed outright: and an elegant tomb over your cold ashes in Westminster Abbey. What more can ye want? It's a splendid chance. You can paint the Mahdi as black as you like, and no criticism. Sure, there'll be nobody else on the spot to contradict you.'

The idea fell in well with Linnell's present humour. When a man has just been disappointed in love, he takes gloomy views as to the future of the universe. Linnell was anxious to go away anywhere from England, and not indisposed to get killed and be done with it. At Khartoum his various talents and acquirements would be worth more to himself and the world at large than anywhere else. He wanted action; he wanted excitement. The novelty of the position would turn the current of his pessimistic thoughts. And besides, if he died—for he didn't conceal from himself the fact that there was danger in the scheme—he saw how his death might be made useful to Psyche. Though she wasn't the same Psyche he had once dreamt about, he loved her still, and he would love her for ever. He could leave all he possessed to Psyche. That would be heaping coals of fire, indeed, on her head; and even Haviland Dumaresq, probably, would not refuse to take a dead man's money. And Psyche would then have what she lived for. She wanted riches; and this would

ensure them. It would be better so. Psyche would derive far more pleasure from that heavy metal than ever he could.

'Really,' he said, with a bitter smile, 'I don't know, Considine, that what you propose mightn't very well suit me. Would it be too late now to see the *Porte-Crayon* people after we get up to town this very evening?'

'Too late, is it?' the correspondent echoed, delighted. 'Divvel a bit, I tell you. We'll ring them up out of the sleep of the just. Though they're rascals enough, if it comes to that, to deserve to lie awake from sunset to cockcrow. They're just dying to get some fellow to volunteer for the place. Old Lingard 'd see you if it was two in the morning. You can arrange to-night, and pack at once, and come off with me by the first Continental train to-morrow. Why, I want a man who can speak Arabic myself. Camels I understand—I rode some dozens of them to death—may Heaven forgive me for it!—pushing on to Candahar in the Afghan business: but Arabic, I admit, 's one too many for me. I'll take you round to see old Lingard at once, when we get up to town, and we'll be whirling across France in a Pulman car by this time to-morrow. We'll catch the *train de luxe* at Paris and you'll just have time to meet the Alexandria steamer before she leaves Brindisi.'

Linnell's mind was made up in a moment. He would go to Africa. And, sure enough, by eleven o'clock that night it was all settled: Linnell had accepted the proffered post as special artist for the *Porte-Crayon* at Khartoum; and Psyche lay, white as death, with Linnell's letter pressed against her heaving bosom, on her own little bed in the Wren's Nest at Petherton.

CHAPTER XVII.

THEN AND IN THAT CASE.

EVEN after the business with the *Porte-Crayon* was settled, however, Linnell did not go straight to his hotel. He had other work to do before he could finish the

evening. He jumped into a hansom in hot haste, and drove round to his lawyer's, whom he wished to see upon important business. He drove to the private address, of course, not to the office; but late as it was, the lawyer was out—at his club most likely, the servant thought; and Linnell, all on fire to conclude his business at the earliest possible moment, drove down to the club forthwith to intercept him. He found the man of law relaxing his mind at that abode of luxury in a hand at whist, and waited with impatience for his hasty interview till the rubber was over. Then he said hurriedly:

'Mr. Burchell, I want you three minutes in the library. I won't detain you longer than that. But—— This is a matter that won't wait. I'm off to Khartoum to join Gordon to-morrow.'

'And you want your will made!' the solicitor suggested, with the rapid wisdom born of old experience.

'Precisely, that's it. You hit the right nail on the head at once. Can you draw it up for me here and now? I leave to-morrow morning by the 9.40.'

'My dear sir,' the lawyer remonstrated, 'this is very precipitate. But you know your own business better than I do. If you wish it, certainly; a will's a thing one can do off-hand. We'll get two witnesses here on the spot. Watson's here: you know Watson, I think: and your cousin Sir Austen's dining with him to-night in the club. Shall I ask them to attest? But perhaps that won't do; you may mean your cousin to benefit under the document.'

Linnell smiled.

'No, I don't,' he said. 'My bequests are few. Single, in fact. A very short paper. It won't take you two minutes to draw it up. Testamentary disposition reduced to its simplest and most primitive elements. I leave everything absolutely to a solitary person. Sir Austen will do as well as anybody else if he cares to sign it.'

Mr. Burchell went off for a few seconds to detain two fit and proper witnesses from leaving the club (as it was getting late), and returned triumphant at the end of that time with news that the needful legal attestors might be found when wanted in the first smoking-room.

'And now,' he said, taking up a sheet of blank paper with a smile, 'what's to be the tenor of this most hasty document?'

'As I said,' Linnell answered, looking straight with empty eyes into the vacant fireplace: 'I leave everything I die possessed of to Psyche, daughter of Haviland Dumaresq, of the Wren's Nest, Petherton Episcopi.'

And he wrote the names down as he spoke, for better security, on the back of an envelope which he handed to the lawyer.

Mr. Burchell whistled audibly to himself; but he was too old and too practised a hand at his trade to dream of remonstrating or asking any questions. He merely suggested in the most matter-of-fact voice, 'Shall I add, "whom it is my intention hereafter to marry"? The addition's usual, and in case of any dispute as to probate of the will, it carries weight with judges and juries. Some reason for a bequest is ordinarily given, when large sums are bequeathed to strangers in blood. The law expects at least a show of explanation. Otherwise, one is apt to have questions raised as to undue influence, inquiries as to sound disposing state of mind at the time, or other doubts as to precise fitness for testamentary disposition at the date of executing. May I add the clause? It simplifies difficulties.'

'No,' Linnell answered sharply and promptly. 'It is *not* my intention now or at any time to marry the lady. I leave it to her absolutely *sans phrase*. If you want a reason, say that I bequeath it to her as a testimony to the profound respect I feel for the literary and philosophical ability of her distinguished father.'

The lawyer paused, with his pen in his hand.

'It's not my place, of course,' he said in a very quiet voice, 'to interfere in any way, however tentatively, with a client's wishes or mode of disposal of his own property; but I think it only my duty to tell you at once that that will has a very small chance indeed of ever getting probate.'

'Why?' Linnell asked, half angrily.

'Now, don't be annoyed,' the lawyer answered, judicially balancing his pen on his extended forefinger. 'My

object is not to thwart your wishes, but simply to ensure their being duly carried out. Bear with me while I explain to you in very brief terms wherein such a will is likely to defeat its own purpose. You're going, you say, to-morrow to the Soudan?'

Linnell nodded.

'Very well,' the lawyer went on, with demonstrative penholder; 'you go in a very great hurry. I don't presume to say what may be the causes which have led you to leave England in such breathless haste; but we will suppose, for the purposes of argument alone, that they are causes not entirely unconnected with relations you may have entertained or thought of entertaining with this young lady. You come up here to-night, late in the evening, in a state of obvious and unmistakable nervous excitement, and you ask me to draw up a will for you, in the library of a club, at an unseasonable hour, leaving away every penny you possess from your kinsmen in blood, whoever they may be, to complete stranger, whose name and status you can or efine to me by her relationship to a gentleman equally remote in law and fact from you. And then you propose as one of your witnesses to this very doubtful and unsatisfactory transaction the heir-at-law and next-of-kin, Sir Austen Linnell, whom you intend to ignore, and whose interest it is to set aside, if possible, the entire document. As your solicitor, I ask you plainly, isn't this course of action open to objection? Mind, I don't suggest such a point of view as my own at all; but won't a hard-headed, common-sense English jury simply say: "The man came up to town disappointed, in a breathless hurry; ran off to the Soudan, foolishly, at a moment's notice; got killed there, when he needn't have gone at all if he didn't like" —I'm discounting your decease, you observe, because no will, of course, takes effect under any circumstances during the lifetime of the testator—"left all he had to leave to a young girl he had probably only known for a couple of months; and cut off, without even a proverbial shilling, the whole of his own kith and kin, including a real live British baronet, whom any man of sense ought to have coddled and made much of as a distinguished

relative"? I put it to you, wouldn't the average respectable English juryman—pig-headed, no doubt, but eminently practical—say at once: "The man was not of sound disposing mind. He must have been mad to prefer a girl he wasn't going to marry, to his own most esteemed and respected relative"? Observe, I don't for a moment suggest they would be at all right; but, as your legal adviser, I feel bound to tell you what view I think they'd take in such a contingency.'

'We must risk it,' Linnell answered, with enforced quietness. 'I'm sure myself I was never of sounder disposing mind before—in fact, till now I never had any reason to think of disposing of anything. And as to Sir Austen, we can substitute somebody else for him at a pinch. Though I think him far too much of a gentleman to wish to dispute anybody's will in his own favour.'

The lawyer's brows contracted slightly.

'In matters of business,' he said with quiet decision, 'it never does to trust too implicitly one's own father. Treat all the world as if they were rogues alike, and the honest ones will never owe you a grudge for it. But let that pass. Now, see one other point. No will, as I said just now, takes effect in any case during the testator's lifetime. You're going on a distant and dangerous errand. The chances are, you may never come back again. It's our duty to face all possible contingencies beforehand, you see. In case you should meet with any accident over yonder in the Soudan—in case, for example, the whole Khartoum garrison should be blotted out to a man, as Hicks Pasha's army was the other day—what legal proof of death can we have? and how would you wish me to comport myself meanwhile towards this young lady? Am I to communicate with her immediately whenever I have any serious ground to apprehend that some misfortune may possibly have overtaken you; or am I to wait a reasonable length of time after Khartoum's smashed, before unnecessarily harrowing her delicate feelings by letting her know that my suspicions are justified?'

'I'm afraid her feelings won't be particularly harrowed,' Linnell answered with a gloomy look. 'But wait, if you like, the reasonable time. It would be

awkward if she were to come into the property for awhile, and—and I were afterwards to turn up unexpectedly like a *revenant* to reclaim it. Not, of course, that under such circumstances I should ever dream of reclaiming it at all.' The lawyer's eyebrows executed a rapid upward movement. 'But still, it's best to avoid all unnecessary complications. Let twelve months elapse before you communicate with her.'

Mr. Burchell made no audible answer; he simply arched his eyebrows still higher, and went on drawing up the short form of will, writing the attestation clause, and taking instructions as to executors and other technical details. When all was finished, he handed the paper to Linnell to peruse.

'Will that do?' he asked quietly.

'That'll do, perfectly,' Linnell answered, glancing over it. 'Will you kindly go down now, and get your witnesses?'

In two minutes more the lawyer returned.

'This is very unfortunate,' he said. 'It's getting late, and there's nobody I know left in the club at all but Sir Austen and the other man. We can't go and board an entire stranger with a polite request to come and see somebody he doesn't know sign an important legal document. I'm afraid, undesirable as it certainly is, we shall have to fall back upon your cousin's signature.'

'Very well,' Linnell replied with perfect trustfulness. 'Sir Austen let it be. We've met once or twice on neutral ground before, and we shall meet often enough now at Khartoum. I don't like him, but I trust him implicitly. In matters of that sort, one can always trust an English gentleman.'

'Not when you've seen as much of probate as I have,' the lawyer interposed with quiet emphasis. 'Where probate's concerned, a man should never trust his own mother. But if you *must* go to Africa to-morrow, and if this will must be signed to-night, we must get whoever we can to attest it. Ten minutes to twelve, and it's dated to-day. No time to be lost. I'll go down again and bring up your cousin.'

Two minutes later Sir Austen came up, coldly polite.

'Good-evening, Mr. Linnell,' he said with a chilly bow. 'Under other circumstances, I might perhaps have declined to undertake this little service. But we needn't conceal from ourselves at present the fact that my cousin Frank's sudden death, of which you have now of course already heard, has altered to some extent our relations towards one another. It's no longer necessary for his sake to adopt the attitude I once felt constrained to adopt towards you. I have to thank you, too, for your letter in reply to mine, and for what, under the circumstances, I must certainly call your very generous and friendly conduct—now unfortunately of no avail. You sign, do you? Thank you: thank you. Where do I put my name? There? Ah, thanks. — Here, Watson, you put your signature under mine. — That concludes the business, I suppose? Very well, then, Burchell, the thing's finished: now you can release us.—I understand, Mr. Linnell, you leave England to-morrow.'

'For the Soudan, yes. Viâ Brindisi.'

Sir Austen started.

'Why, how odd!' he said. 'A strange coincidence! I go by the same train. To the Soudan! Incredible. You're not going out to join Gordon, then, are you?'

'I'm going as special artist for the *Porte-Crayon*,' Linnell answered quietly. 'I didn't think of it till this afternoon; but I met a friend who told me of the post, and I made up my mind at an hour's notice; so now I'm off by to-morrow's Oriental express.'

They stopped there talking for half an hour or so, Sir Austen's iciness thawing a little when he learned that his cousin was to be thrown in with him so much for an indefinite period; and then, as the small-hours were closing in, they drove off separately to their various resting-places, to snatch a few hours' sleep before to-morrow's journey. At the foot of the club stairs, Sir Austen detained the lawyer a moment after Linnell had hailed a loitering hansom.

'I say, Burchell,' he said, lighting a cigar in the vestibule, 'what's your opinion of Charles Linnell's condition to-night? Didn't seem quite in testamentary form, did

he? Odd he should want to make a will in such a precious hurry just now, isn't it?'

'Not at all,' the lawyer answered with prompt decision. 'You've settled up all your own affairs, no doubt, before leaving the country for so dangerous an expedition.'

'Ah, but that's different, you know. I'm going with her Majesty's approbation on active service. This painter fellow's chosen to visit Khartoum of his own accord, and he's chosen to start at a moment's notice; and as far as I could see—just glancing at the body of the will hurriedly—he's left everything he possesses to some play-actress or somebody. Psyche Dumaresq, that was the name. Theatrical, obviously. It won't hold water. The man's in a very excited state of mind, that's clear. He laughs and talks in a dreary, weary way. Miss Psyche Dumaresq must have thrown him overboard. And now he wants to set out for Khartoum and get shot through the head, for no other reason than just to make that faithless lady sensible of her error with a thumping legacy. He was always as mad as a hatter, this Yankee painter fellow, and to-night he's more excited and madder than ever. I tell you what it is, Burchell: the will won't stand. The next-of-kin will inherit the estate. Miss Psyche Dumaresq may whistle for her money.'

Mr. Burchell only shook his head in quiet dissent.

'As sane as you are,' he answered with a nod; 'but a great deal too good for this world of ours in many ways. *He* doesn't want to wait for dead men's shoes. *He* doesn't want to get anybody's money.' And he murmured to himself, as he went down the club steps in the summer drizzle: 'If only I knew where Linnell was stopping, I'd go round to him now, late as it is, and advise him to make another will on spec. at Cairo or Alexandria. Sir Austen's far too sharp for my taste. But Linnell forgot to tell me where he put up, and I can't go round to every hotel in all London at this time of night and knock them up on the bare chance of finding him.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN A BELEAGUERED CITY.

THE two Linnells and the correspondent Considine were the last Europeans who made their way into the lines of Khartoum before communications with the outer world were finally interrupted by the advance of the Mahdi. Three days after their arrival all ways were blocked; Omdurman was cut off, the river was surrounded, and a sea of rampant fanatical barbarism surged wildly up on every side round the undermanned ramparts of the doomed city.

It was a week or two later, under a tropical sky in one of the narrow lanes of the Nubian town, that two Europeans walked along slowly with doubtful tread among the eager and excited crowd of natives. Already the noise of artillery from the outlying forts thundered on the ear; already the hurry and scurry of a great siege were visible everywhere among the thronged bazaars. But the two Europeans walked on undismayed between the chattering negroes, engaged in strange talk amid that babel of voices. One of them was clad from head to foot in Arab costume, for Linnell invariably preferred that simple dress to the warm south; he had grown accustomed to it in his long camping-out expeditions on the frontiers of the desert, and it was better adapted, he said, than our cramping and close-fitting European garments to the needs and peculiarities of a hot climate. In face and figure, indeed, when so accoutred, he might easily have passed for an Arab himself; his dark hair, his regular oval face, his clear-cut features, and his rich brown complexion, still further bronzed by long exposure to the African sun, all helped to heighten his Oriental assumption and to turn him into a veritable son of the desert. Hardly a Mohammedan that passed but took him at a glance for one of the Faithful of Islam: mien and bearing were Oriental in the extreme: even at the mosques his behaviour passed muster; long usage had taught him with unerring skill when at Mecca to do as Mecca does.

The other man who stalked along by his side at a steady swing was the correspondent Considine, wearing European garb of the semi-tropical sort, in white helmet and linen jacket, and with the devil-may-care air of absolute assurance on his face which only the cosmopolitan Irishman in the journalistic service can ever assume to full perfection. The picture was symbolical of Khartoum itself during those short-lived days of its European culture. On the one hand, the tall white minarets and flat-topped houses of the native town; on the other hand, the great Government buildings in the meanest bastard Parisian style, the large hospitals, the European shops, the huge magazines, the guns, the ammunition, the telegraph, the printing-presses. But though those two were walking the streets of beleaguered Khartoum, their speech for the moment was not of Mahdis and assaults, but all of England. Haviland Dumaresq would have thought this indeed fame could he have heard the grave-looking Oriental in burnous and hood uttering his name with profound respect in the narrow and very malodorous alleys of that far African capital.

'And you know Dumaresq, then!' the Irishman exclaimed jauntily as he picked his way through the sloppy lane. 'A wonderful man, and as learned as a library; but between you and me, you'll admit, me boy, a wee little bit up in the clouds, for all that. Sure, I tried to read the "Encyclopædic Philosophy" meself once; it was at Peshawar, I remember, just after the outbreak of the Ali Musjid business, you know, when we were attacking the Khyber; and I found the book, in four volumes, in the library of the good civilian who put me up while I was arranging for my camels. Says I to myself: "Considine, me boy, philosophy disdains the alarms of war: here's a work that by all accounts you ought to know the inside of." But when I took it up and began to read it, by George, sir, I hadn't got through ten pages before I put it down again, staggered; not a blessed word of it could I understand. "Is it Persian it is?" says I to the civilian.—"No, sir," says me host; "it's meant for English."—"Well, then," says I, "if that's philosophy,

it's not the proper mental pabulum, any way, for a descendant of fighting Considines of County Cavan." And with that, I shut the book up right off with a bang, and devil another word of it do I mean to read as long as I'm left in the land of the living.'

'That's the real difficulty about Dumaresq's fame,' Linnell said quietly, adjusting his robe and stepping over a gutter. 'He goes too deep for popular comprehension. If he were less great, he would seem to be greater. As it is, his work is oftener praised than looked at.'

'To be sure,' the Irishman assented with good-humoured acquiescence. 'The book doesn't sell. It's caviare to the general. Macmurdo and White dropped a power of money over it at the first push off; and though the sales have pulled up a little of late years, owing to the reviews, it can't have done much more yet than cover its expenses, for it's a big venture. I know all about it, ye see, for I was a hack of Macmurdo's meself, worse luck, when I first went to seek my fortune in London; slaved in the office from morning to night editing one of his children's magazines—the *Juvenile World*, the old scamp called it; and a harder taskmaster than Sandy Macmurdo hasn't been known in the world, I take it, since the children of Israel evacuated Egypt.'

'It's selling better now, I believe,' Linnell continued with a quiet confidence. 'A great many copies have been bought up lately—enough, I hope, to make Dumaresq comfortable for some time to come; at least, till other contingencies drop in to help him.'

'Faith, it may make Sandy Macmurdo comfortable for a week or two in his neat little villa down at Wimbledon Hill,' the Irishman answered with a boisterous laugh; 'but sorrow a penny of it all will poor old Dumaresq ever finger. To me certain knowledge, he sold the copyright of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy" outright to Macmurdo and White for a very small trifle when I was working me fingers to the bone in the *Juvenile World* office.'

'Are you sure of that?' Linnell cried, stopping short in sudden dismay, and almost knocking over a fat old

Nubian woman who was waddling behind them in her baggy clothes, unexpectant of the halt and the consequent blocking of the narrow alley.

'Sure of it, is it? Why, I know it for a certainty,' the Irishman answered. 'I heard Macmurdo discussing the whole thing himself with the philosopher. He's a sharp man of business, you know, is old Sandy Macmurdo: as good as three Jews or half a dozen Armenians; he sniffs a paying book as soon as he looks at it. Says Sandy: "This is a long investment, Mr. Dumaresq—a very long investment. If you hold on to it yourself, it'll pay you in the end, I don't deny: but it won't begin to pay you a farthing for the next fifteen years or so. Let's be fair and square. I'm a capitalist: you're not. I can afford to wait: you can't. I'm willing to bet on your chances of disciples. Better take a lump sum down now at once, than go on hoping and biding your time till you're a man of seventy." And Dumaresq saw he was right at a glance, so he closed with him then and there for a paltry cheque: for all the philosopher wanted himself was to get the book published and out somehow.'

'Then sales at present don't matter a bit to him!' Linnell cried, profoundly disappointed.

'No more than they do to us at Khartoum this minute,' the Irishman answered with good-humoured ease. 'Sorrow a penny does the poor old philosopher get from all his writings. So, if you've been giving away the book to your friends, as a Christmas present, to benefit the author, ye've just succeeded in supplying Macmurdo with extra pocket-money to lay on the favourite at Sandown Park Races.'

'That's exactly what I have been doing,' Linnell blurted out with regretful annoyance.

'And to what tune?' Considine asked, amused.

Khartoum is a far cry from Petherton Episcopi; and Linnell, who would have shrunk as a man of honour from disclosing the facts of the case in England, found his modesty forsake him in the heart of Africa.

'To the tune of eight hundred guineas or thereabouts,' he answered with warmth.

The Irishman drew a very long breath.

'Faith!' he said, laughing, 'I didn't know ye had so much money about you. But I see your idea. Ye're a generous fellow. Well, you're quite mistaken. Macmurdo and White have divided every penny of it!'

To Linnell the disappointment was a very bitter one. He gnawed his heart at it. But he saw at a glance that Considine was right. The explanation cleared up at once whatever had seemed mysterious and unsatisfactory about Dumaresq's conduct with regard to the money. With a start of regret, Linnell recognised now when it was all too late that Dumaresq must have paid for the picture of the Wren's Nest out of his own pocket. He had meant to enrich the family by his nameless generosity, and he had only succeeded, after all, in making the poor old philosopher spend twenty guineas from his scanty stock upon a useless water-colour!

He hated his art in that moment of awakening. He wished he had never gone near Petherton. But then—he would never have known Psyche!

And here at Khartoum, surrounded and beleaguered, he had no chance even of setting things right again by word or letter. All ways were closed: no chance of escape. He must wait through the weary long months of the siege till relief arrived—if ever relief *did* arrive—from England.

But if relief never came at all, then Psyche at least would read his will, and know how much, after all, he loved her.

At Marquet's shop in the European quarter, Considine paused and gazed into the window.

'What are you looking for?' Linnell asked carelessly.

'For yourself, sure enough,' the Irishman answered, with a sudden start of recognition.

A faint shudder passed over Linnell's handsome face. He fancied he understood, yet hardly liked to confess it even to himself.

'Why, what do you mean?' he murmured incredulously.

'For Linnell,' the correspondent replied with cheerful alacrity. 'Ye'll know Linnell, surely?'

The painter froze up into himself once more.

'No, I don't feel sure I do,' he answered, trembling.

'Then you've missed the best medicine that ever was invented for a tropical climate,' Considine exclaimed, with warmth, slapping his friend on the shoulder. 'I'm going to secure some boxes for meself before they're all gone, now supplies are cut off. Ye'd better let me get a couple for you. Linnell's Pills—an American preparation. They've just driven Nile fever out of Khartoum. There's nothing on earth like them for malarious diseases.'

'Thank you,' Linnell answered, drawing himself up stiffly; 'I—I'm much obliged. I don't think I'll trouble you, though. I'm sure I don't need them.'

'Have ye ever heard of them?' Considine asked, point-blank.

Linnell hesitated.

'Yes,' he said after a moment, overwhelmed with shame, but too much a man to deny the fact. 'To tell you the simple truth—I live off them.'

Considine looked up at him with an amused smile.

'An' is it you, then, that makes them?' he asked, with Irish quickness.

'I did,' Linnell answered, forcing himself bravely to speak the truth—'or at least my father did. We've sold the patent; but I live still on the proceeds of the invention.'

There was a long pause, while Considine went in and made his purchase. When he came out, he handed a little packet without a word to his friend, who slipped it guiltily into his waistcoat-pocket.

'Linnell,' the Irishman remarked with Hibernian candour, as they went on once more, 'I never knew till to-day what a bit of a snob ye were. Ye think pills are beneath the dignity of a member of an English bar'net's family.'

The painter flushed up to his eyes at once, but not with anger.

'I was just thinking to myself,' he said quietly, 'you

might have put that utter misinterpretation upon my obvious embarrassment.'

'Well, an' why should a man be ashamed of having made his money in good sound pills?' the Irishman asked with a confident air.

'It's not that,' Linnell answered, quivering with sensitiveness—'though pills are at best a ludicrous sort of thing for a cultivated man to make his money out of; but I've always been afraid, to tell you the truth, I was living on the proceeds of pure quackery. It's all a matter of rubbishing advertisement in the end, I fancy. I could never bring myself to use the money got from that source as if it were my own. As far as I could, I've tried to pay my way, myself, out of my immediate earnings from my own art, and held my father's fortune apart as a sum at my disposal in trust for humanity.'

Considine paused and looked back at him astonished.

'My dear fellow,' he cried with convincing frankness, 'if that's your idea, I can assure ye, from me own personal knowledge, ye're mistaken entirely. It isn't quackery at all, at all. They're the best pills that ever were compounded. Malarial fever goes down before them like grass. If ye won't take me word for it, ye'll take Gordon's, anny way; and 'twas Gordon that said to me only last night: "Considine, me boy," said he, "wherever ye go in tropical climates, remember to take two things with ye—sulphate of quinine, and a gross of Linnell's. The man that invented Linnell's," says he, "may never have had a statue put up to him, but he was the greatest benefactor of our species, after Jenner, in the nineteenth century." That's just what Gordon said to me himself; and he's as likely, I should say, as anny man living to know what he's talking about.'

The whole point of view was a novel one to Linnell.

'If I thought that,' he answered in a low tone, 'I should feel happier in my mind than I've felt for years. I've always had my doubts about my father's fortune. But let's change the subject. I'm sick and tired of it.'

CHAPTER XIX.

A LITTLE CLOUD.

At Petherton the autumn and winter passed slowly away, and Psyche's heart gradually accustomed itself to its great sorrow. She was brave, and she stifled her grief bravely. Haviland Dumaresq, watching her closely, with his keen gray eyes and his eager glance, flattered his own soul (poor purblind philosopher!) that Psyche had forgotten all about that obtrusive painter fellow. Oh, wilful foolishness of parents who think such things! Your children's hearts veil their wounds from your eyes with sedulous care, and you say with a smile: 'All's well! I can see no scars anywhere.'

But Psyche herself—ah, how different there! She had never forgotten him; she could never forget him. It wasn't merely that she had dismissed to his death the one man she had ever loved. It wasn't merely that he had left her abruptly, and gone where communications with him were practically impossible. It wasn't merely that his life was in danger, and that he might never perhaps return to see her. Worse than all those, though all those indeed were bad enough, was the horrible, hateful, haunting consciousness that she had been forced to show herself in a false light to Linnell, and that if Linnell died on that forlorn hope, he would die believing her unutterably mercenary, and cruel, and selfish. To show one's self in false colours to those one loves is inexpressibly painful. Her soul loathed the picture Linnell must have formed of her. It was torture to her to think he must go on so long mistaking so utterly her character and her feelings.

For Psyche had learned, three days later, on what dangerous errand her lover had started. She read the announcement casually in the *Athenæum*: 'Mr. C. A. Linnell, the rising young painter, whose Oriental subjects have attracted so much attention in the Grosvenor this year, has accepted the difficult and somewhat thankless task of special artist to the *Porte-Crayon* with Gordon at

Khartoum. He set out for his perilous post on Saturday last, in company with Mr. T. A. Considine, the well-known correspondent of the *Morning Telephone*.' How bald and matter-of-fact the paragraph sounded, as it stood there among a dozen other indifferent scraps of gossip and literary notes of the *Athenæum !* and yet what a tragedy it meant for Psyche, who had driven him forth, perhaps to his death, and felt herself very little short of a murderess !

If only he could have known ! If only he could have known ! Her promise ! Her promise ! That fatal promise !

Restraining her tears with a deadly effort, she rushed upstairs into her own room and locked herself in with all the impetuous sorrow of budding girlhood. Then she flung herself on her bed and gave free vent to her grief. She cried, and cried, and cried again, in a luxury of agony —till the hour of tea came, and she had to go down again.

But even so, she was Dumaresq's daughter. She rose, and bathed her face carefully. Her self-control was wonderful. It was with eyes scarcely red and with a cold proud air that she handed the paper across to her father with his cup of tea ten minutes later, and said in a voice hardly trembling with emotion : ' Mr. Linnell has accepted a post in Africa now, you see, papa.'

Haviland Dumaresq eyed her keenly, and thought to himself with a smile of inward satisfaction : ' A mere light scratch ! The first shallow love of childhood ! Profound emotions preclude speech. Women, before their affections are fixed, are necessarily plastic. Unable to choose freely for themselves, like men, they can shift their emotions from object to object, or hold them in suspense, an affinity unsaturated, till the one man comes on whom to focus their regard permanently. She could never have felt the parting very much, after all, or she couldn't talk as carelessly now as that about him.'

But in spite of philosophy, all through the autumn and winter months Psyche grieved silently, silently. Her sorrow was all turned in upon herself. She had no one to share it, no one to sympathize with her. Geraldine

Maitland had gone with her parents for the season to Algiers: with Ida Mansel, that correct and cultivated Girtonian product, she had little in common; so she was left to brood over her great grief in solitude. Now, a sorrow turned inward is the most dangerous and insidious in its effects of any. The suspense and the isolation were wearing Psyche out. Only that unquenchable Dumaresquian spirit of hers enabled her to put so good a face upon it. But a Dumaresq suffers, and suffers in silence. Her father never knew how Psyche was suffering. With a brave heart she came down to breakfast each day as though she had not lain awake and cried all night: with a brave heart she took up the paper each morning to read afresh of new delays in the relief of Khartoum.

Everybody remembers that long-drawn period of horrible suspense, when a handful of brave Englishmen held out by themselves against tremendous odds in the doomed city. Everybody remembers the breathless interest of that painful drama, and the slow lingering despair of hoping against hope for the gallant souls locked up in Khartoum.

But to Psyche the suspense was more terrible than to anyone: the despair was most poignant—the hopelessness most appalling.

She had sent Linnell to his death, she felt sure. He would die without ever knowing how profoundly she loved him.

Yet even so, she bore up like a Dumaresq. Her father should never know how she felt. At all hazards she would keep that terrible secret from him.

So night after night, as she lay awake and cried, she learnt to cry silently, imperceptibly almost. It was not merely a sort of crying that made no noise: it was a sort of crying that let the tears trickle slowly out, one after another, without even so much as reddening the eyes and eyelids. She practised crying in this quiet way, deliberately practised it, like a Dumaresq that she was: and to such a pitch of perfection did she bring it at last, that even the tears themselves ceased to flow. She cried, as it were, all mentally and internally.

But her eyes ached horribly none the less for that.

Bright and clear and beautiful as usual, they ached worse every day with that unnatural effort.

One evening in January, as the days were lengthening again, and Psyche was looking forward to the time when Geraldine, dear Geraldine, might return from Algeria to comfort her soul, Haviland Dumaresq came home from the village with a London newspaper, and handed it to Psyche to read aloud to him. That was an ordeal she had often to endure now. The papers were full of Gordon and Khartoum—fears for the besieged, hopes for the relievers—and Psyche, all tremulous, was compelled to read aloud in a firm, clear tone those conflicting rumours, and pretend it meant nothing more to her soul than the meetings of Public Companies or the Sporting Intelligence.

For with all his philosophy the philosopher had never mastered the simple fact that he was slowly killing his own child by unintentional cruelty. He was sure she had forgotten that little episode altogether now. Khartoum was no more to her than Jerusalem or Jericho.

'"We have all along counselled the Government," Psyche real aloud, '"to adopt a more vigorous and aggressive attitude towards the tribes that still block or harass the passage of our forces up the bank of the river. Unless something is done within three months to relieve the garrison which now holds out——"'

'Well?' Haviland Dumaresq murmured, looking up inquiringly as Psyche broke off in sudden bewilderment. 'What next, my child? Go on, won't you?'

'I—I don't know what next,' Psyche cried, faltering and laying the paper helplessly on her knees. 'I don't quite see. I think—there's a sort of blur somehow across the printing.'

Haviland Dumaresq took the paper incredulously from her hands. He glanced with his cold unflinching eyes at the leader she had been reading so quietly and calmly. Nothing could be clearer or more distinct than its type. A sudden thought flashed across his brain for a moment. Could Linnell by any possibility be mentioned in the article? Psyche had almost forgotten that foolish little love episode by this time, of course; but the sudden sight of the painter's name staring her unexpectedly in the face

from a public print might no doubt arouse for a second the latent cloud. Emotion dies and revives so strangely. He glanced down the column. No, nothing of the sort could he see anywhere. In a neighbouring column perhaps, then—among the telegraphic items! The painter might have escaped, or might have been killed or rescued. He scanned the telegrams with an eager glance. Nothing there that cast any light upon the subject.

'You must be bilious, my child,' he said, with a searching look, handing her back the paper. 'Accumulation of effete matter uneliminated in the blood often gives rise to yellow patches floating before the eyes. Best relieved by exercise and fresh air. Go on now, Psyche, and read a little further, if it doesn't hurt you.'

What a blank page the human heart often shows to those who think they stand nearest and dearest of all to it! Exercise and fresh air indeed, for a broken spirit! How little Haviland Dumaresq, in his philosophic isolation, knew what inward grief was eating away his Psyche's soul and undermining his Psyche's eyesight!

The trembling girl, all calmness without, took the paper back from his hands without a single word, and went on reading for some minutes longer. Then the letters on the page disappeared once more, as if by magic, and a vague nothingness swam a second time in the air before her.

'I can't read, papa,' she cried, laying the swimming paper down in despair. 'The words all seem to fade into a blank before my eyes. I can see nothing. It's a sort of wandering haze. I don't think I can be very well this morning.'

'A yellow patch floating before your face?' Haviland Dumaresq asked with suggestive quickness. 'A sort of central glow or spot of fire, fading off at the sides into normal vision?'

'Oh no,' Psyche said; 'nothing at all of the sort. I've had that too: I know what you mean; but not lately: this is something ever so much deeper and more serious than that. It's a sort of cloud that rises up, I think, in my eye itself; and whenever it rises, I see nothing at all for a few minutes: the whole world seems

to become a kind of mist or haze floating vaguely in dim outline in front of me.'

Dumaresq rose from his chair with great deliberation and moved to the window. 'Come here, my child,' he said with that gentle tenderness in his tone which he always displayed in talking to Psyche—for, oh, how he loved her! 'Eyes are far too precious to be neglected with impunity. The more complex an organ, the greater the difficulty in re-establishing equilibrium once upset. Let me look and see if there's anything the matter with them.'

Psyche walked forward with uncertain steps, half feeling her way between the chairs and tables, in a manner that brought the old philosopher's heart into his mouth like a child's. Could anything be wrong, then, with his darling's sight? He held her upturned face gently between his palms, and gazed down with profound searching into those deep-blue eyes. A cataract forming? No, nothing like that. 'The conjunctiva and cornea are perfectly normal,' he murmured with a sigh of distinct relief, for the bare suggestion of anything wrong with his Psyche's eyes had stirred him deeply. 'The lenses, too, seem absolutely right. If there's mischief anywhere, it must be deep down in the region of the retina itself. We'll test it carefully. But there's no hereditary predisposition to weakness of vision. Functional, functional it *must* be functional. Your dear mother's eyes were as sharp as needles; and as for me, I can read the smallest print to this day, as you know, Psyche, at least as well as any man of twenty.'

He took down a book from the shelf at random and opened the title-page at three or four paces. 'Read as much as you can of that, my child,' he said, holding it up to her.

Psyche read it without a moment's delay: '"Contributions to Molecular Physics in the Domain of Radiant Heat, by John Tyndall."'

Her father's face lighted up with pleasure. 'Good!' he said, relieved, as his heart gave a bound. 'Try again, Psyche,' and he took down another. 'What's this?' he went on, walking a step or two across the room, and

holding the title-page open once more before Psyche's eyes.

'"The Fertilization of Flowers, by Professor Hermann Müller,"' Psyche read out slowly; 'then there's something I can't quite see; and after that I can make out plainly the two words "Charles Darwin."'

'"With a preface by Charles Darwin,"' her father said cheerfully. 'Come, come, Psyche, that's not so bad. There can't be much wrong with the retina, anyhow, if you can read like this at eight feet distance.'

Psyche sighed and held her peace. She knew the world had faded away suddenly before her eyes more than once of late, and she could hardly treat this discomposing consciousness as lightly as her father did. But if *he* was satisfied, all was well. For herself, she could bear it as she had borne what was so much harder and deadlier to bear than mere blindness.

Dumaresq gazed at her for a minute in silence. Then he said once more, 'Has this happened often?'

Psyche hesitated. She couldn't bear to grieve him. 'Once or twice, papa,' she said after a brief pause. 'But it's nothing much; it'll go off soon—when the summer comes back to us.'

Dumaresq looked down at her with a satisfied air. 'No, it's nothing much,' he repeated. 'I know the human eye by this time pretty well. I made an exhaustive study of eyes, you know, when I was working up my second volume. If I saw the slightest cause for alarm in the case, I'd take you up at once to consult Critchett. But I don't see any. The cornea's normal; the retina's normal; and the power of vision is in no way defective. These occasional failures must be purely nervous. In girls of your age one must expect a certain amount of nervous abnormality. An incident of our civilization: we expel Nature, as Horace says, with a fork, but Nature will always get the better of us somehow.'

Poor old man! With all his wisdom and all his power of generalization, he never realized the simple truth that it was *he* who was trying to crush Psyche's nature, and that one way or other Psyche's nature would in the end prove irresistible.

CHAPTER XX.

AT BAY.

Away over in Africa, the outlook was still gloomier. The 25th of January had come at Khartoum. That long, long siege drew slowly to its close. The end was not far off now. On the 13th, the fort of Omdurman, beyond the river, had fallen bodily into the enemy's hands. Starvation and disease were working their way ruthlessly among the remaining defenders. The Mahdi's troops were pressing like jackals about the fated city. It was whispered among the faithful in the town that Faragh Pasha, who kept the Messalamieh Gate, had been holding communications with the besieger's emissaries. The air was thick, as in all beleaguered cities, with vague flying rumours of suspected treachery. Everywhere doubt, panic, uncertainty; everywhere the manifold form of indefinite suspicion. And behind it all, the solemn reality of a certain fate staring them in the face. Unless relief came in six days more, the garrison must surrender out of pure hunger.

But still there was hope, for Wolseley was advancing. The army of rescue was well on its way. Stewart had reached the Abu Klea wells. The Mahdi's forces had been defeated at Gubat. Brave English hearts were eager to release them. By strange unknown sources, by the tales of deserters, by the curious buzzing gossip of the bazaars, news of what was happening in the outer world leaked in, bit by bit, from time to time through the wall of besiegers to the famished garrison. It was known that if the defenders could hold out for one week longer, reinforcements would arrive in river steamers before the quays of Khartoum. So they hoped and hoped, and despaired, and waited.

On that eventful Sunday, the 25th of January, while the notables of the town, pressed hard by hunger, were on their way to the palace to urge Gordon once more to surrender at discretion, three Europeans sat talking together in eager colloquy by the Bourré Gate on the

south front of the city. One of them was a soldier in semi-English uniform; the other two belied their nationality by their complete acceptance of the Arab costume.

'Had any breakfast this morning, Linnell?' Sir Austen asked with good-humoured stoicism, the frank cheery stoicism which the English aristocrat makes it almost a point of honour to display in difficult circumstances. 'By George, what one would give for a British beefsteak now! Tender, juicy, with potato chips! The first thing I shall do when I get back to England will be to order a steak, grilled over the fire, and a dish of potatoes. Taste good, won't it, with a pint of Bass, after so many months of nothing better than roast donkey!'

'*When* ye get back, is it?' Considine murmured half to himself, with irrepressible Celtic spirit. '*If* ye get back, ye mean surely, Sir Austen; for as things go at present, I'm glad for me own part I didn't waste me precious money on taking a return ticket. Me poor old mother'll be the richer for that same when she comes into me property after the Mahdi's eaten us up. Linnell and I had a prime breakfast, though—for Khartoum. A ration of gum and some pounded palm-fibre, and half a rat each, as well as a piece of Indian-meal bread.'

'You're in luck!' Sir Austen echoed, smacking his lips at the rat. 'I haven't tasted a morsel to eat this morning yet. There's breakfast waiting for me up at the palace, but the fire was so heavy on the gate till just now that I've had no time to turn and rest till this minute.'

'And what do you think of things generally now?' Linnell asked quietly. 'Shall we be able to hold out till Stewart's party arrives, or shall we have to surrender under the very nose of the expeditionary force at the last moment?'

Sir Austen shook his head gravely. 'Neither one nor the other,' he answered, like a soldier as he was, with the solemn note of supreme conviction. 'Don't suppose for a minute we're going to escape. The Mahdi's playing with us like a cat with a mouse. It increases his prestige to keep us dawdling. He knows Stewart's force

has reached Matamneh. He knows we can't hold out till the relief arrives. Mark my words: he'll assault us to-morrow as sure as fate; and in our present feeble and hungry condition, we can't pretend to resist his numbers.'

'True for you!' the Irishman put in with reckless bravery. 'Our niggers are too empty, and too tired to fight anny more. When Wolseley comes, he'll come to find us all beautiful specimens for the College of Surgeons. I can see meself stuck up in a glass case: "Skeleton of the late Mr. T. A. Considine; typical example of the Black Celts of Ireland"!'

'And if an assault's made, what shall you do?' Linnell asked with scarcely trembling lips.

His cousin looked back at him like an English soldier. 'Die fighting to the last by Gordon's side,' he answered unhesitatingly.

'Hear, hear!' the Irishman echoed with martial enthusiasm. 'The blood of our ancestors spurs us on to action. We'll be worthy of the fighting Considines of County Cavan.'

Linnell looked them full in the face for one minute in doubt. Then he made up his mind to speak his thought freely. 'Austen,' he said, turning round to his kinsman with a frankly cordial air, 'we're cousins, after all. Till we came to Khartoum, we never really knew one another. This siege has brought us face to face at last. Here we've learned to be brothers at heart, as we ought to be. There were faults on both sides, no doubt—misapprehensions, misconceptions, groundless fears; but we've forgotten them all, and corrected our impressions.'

Sir Austen seized his cousin's hand warmly. 'Charlie,' he said—'let me call you Charlie—you're a good fellow, and I know it now. There's nothing like a siege to make men friends. If ever we two get back to England alive, we'll stand on very different terms with one another henceforth from any we stood on before we came here.'

'Very well,' Linnell went on gravely, returning his grasp. 'We'll fight to the last, if you will, with Gordon. But we needn't make up our minds to die, unless the Mahdi's people insist upon killing us. For my own part,

I've reasons for wishing to return. There are other mistakes I feel I should clear up. I'm not a soldier, like you, Austen; but if we must be attacked, I'll stop at the gate here and fight it out like a man by your side. Still, I want to say one thing to you; and to you, too, Considine, for it's always well to be prepared against all emergencies. I speak Arabic, and I know the ways and manners of Islam as well as I know the streets of London or Paris. If the worst comes to the worst, as come it will, stick by me, both of you. If we're all killed, well and good; somebody in England will be all the richer for it. But if by any stroke of luck we should manage to survive, remember, you stand no chance alone; you're both too obviously and unmistakably Christian to run the gauntlet of the Mahdi's forces. But by my side, and with my knowledge of Arabic and of Mussulman ways, you may get away safely in spite of everything.'

Sir Austen laid his hand gently on his new friend's shoulder.

'My dear fellow,' he said, in a tone of unwonted kindness and cordiality, 'for heaven's sake, don't deceive yourself about this. Don't lay that flattering unction to your soul. Make up your mind at once for the worst. Escape or safety is not on the cards. Unless I greatly mistake my man, the Mahdi means to attack us before to-morrow morning; and if he does, before to-morrow night, as sure as fate, we shall be all dead men. In our present condition, resistance is useless. We may sell our lives hard, but that's all. I can understand that you may want to get away. There may be somebody in England for whose sake you might wish to escape the massacre. That's natural, quite. But a massacre there'll be, as certain as death, and not a living soul in Khartoum—of the Christians, at least—will ever escape from it to tell the story. We may die hard, but die we must, in any case; so the best thing for us all to do is to make our minds up to it well beforehand.'

Linnell answered without the faintest display of emotion.

'Very well; I'm prepared. Gin I mun doy, I mun doy, and there's no help for it. I'll stay by your side

here and fight it out. But, Austen, one or other of us may happen to escape. If it's you, take this address I give you; you'll see whose it is. Write to her that I never forgot her to the last; tell her I began to fear I might somehow have been mistaken; ask her to forgive me for having ever distrusted her.'

Sir Austen took the scrap of paper in the sacred silence with which men receive such things in a great crisis. He folded it up reverently in his pocket-book without looking at it. Then he wrote a few lines in pencil himself, on a page torn out from the note-book at the end, and handed it over to Linnell in return.

'Charlie,' he said in a very regretful voice, 'you're more likely by far to get away safe through this rabble of insane fanatics than I am. Your Arabic and your local colour may pull you through. I've written a word or two there to my wife. I've told her how much I mistook your character and conduct till we learned to know one another here. I've asked her to look upon you—if I should fall—as the head of the house; you know my meaning. I've told her how much your companionship's been worth to me. If ever you get away clear from this detestable hole—by Jove! how they're fusillading away at the gate now—tell her I loved her with my last breath, and that my last thoughts were of her only.'

'Boys,' Considine said, holding his pistol hard, 'I'm sorry to be behind ye both in this matter of sentiment. I've got no wife, and I've got no sweetheart. But it's not me intention to let meself be killed here for nothing, I tell ye. I shall bowl over as many of these niggers as I can; but when the fun's all over and done, I mean to walk across Africa on me own legs, till I come out at Cape Town, if need be, before ever I'll let a nigger put daylight through me. So if ye two have any commands for home, regard me as the post—I'm the man to take them. It's me firrum intention to be buried at peace in the family vault of all the Considines, in me father's own place, in dear old County Cavan.'

As they spoke, Sir Austen took out his note-book once more.

'Charlie,' he said, scribbling down a few words on a blank page, 'take that up for me to the palace, to Gordon. The attack, I'm sure, will come from this side. I've been watching these fellows, and I see they're massing their men for the Bourré Gate. We must concentrate all our forces here; and I wish I felt sure of that fellow Faragh.'

Linnell took the note, and turned on his heel, with the quiet, gliding movement of the true Oriental. Considine gazed after him with an approving glance.

'He's a good fellow that,' he said, turning to Sir Austen; 'and it's very generous of him to propose to stand by you if we have to make our way out through all these blackguards.'

'And by you too,' Sir Austen added quietly.

'By me! Ah, yes; there's no reason there. But to help *you* out of Khartoum, I call really self-sacrificing.'

'Why so?' Sir Austen asked, with a faint tinge of distrust in the tone of his voice.

'Why! Because, me dear sir,' the Irishman answered, with true Irish bluntness, 'if *you* were to be killed, and *he* were to get away, he'd be a bar'net of the United Kingdom, for he's next in succession to the Linnell title.'

Sir Austen glanced up at him from his seat on a step with a sudden glance of suspicious doubt.

'And if *he* were to be killed,' he muttered, 'and *I* were to get away, I'd be next in succession to a far finer property than ever the Linnells of Thorpe Manor could lay claim to.'

'Ye mean the pills?' Considine suggested, with a cautious smile.

'Ah, you know all about it, then,' Sir Austen answered, not without some slight symptoms of embarrassment. 'Yes, I mean the pills, and whatever thereby hangs. Charles Linnell's a rich man; and his money'd take the mortgages off the Manor without feeling it. But I'll stand by him still, in spite of that, if he'll stand by me; for, after all, he's a rare good fellow. Not that we need either of us trouble ourselves about titles or estates as things go now; for before to-morrow evening, Considine—I tell you the truth—we'll be all dead men

in a heap together. The Mahdi 'll be in possession of Khartoum by that time, and he'll treat every man-jack of us as he treated Hicks Pasha's army before us—not a soul will get back alive to England. Don't buoy yourself up with any false hopes of escape or terms. Khartoum's doomed, and every European life within it.'

CHAPTER XXI.

AN ANXIOUS MOMENT.

A FEW hours later, on that terrible Sunday—the last before the final disaster at Khartoum—Sir Austen found himself in the great square of the town, in front of the Governor's house, where a starving crowd of natives was already gathered, eager to hear the last news of the deliberation going on inside the palace. Sir Austen had been relieved for the time from his dangerous and difficult post at the Bourré Gate, and had strolled into the city to learn for himself what hopes the Governor still had as to their chances of holding out till the army of rescue arrived to reinforce them.

It's wonderful how callous people get at last to the dangers of a siege, when once they're in the midst of it. The constant rain of bullets from every side passes absolutely unnoticed. Men cross open spaces under fire without seeming to observe it. Even a shell exploding causes far less commotion than the fall of an omnibus-horse would cause in Regent Street. So Sir Austen strolled on carelessly, undeterred by the distant thud of firing, through those covered streets, overhung with matting to keep off the heat of the mid-day sun, and past the hungry blacks who peered now and again from darkling doorways in the wall, greeting the English officer as he strode by with a military salute in true Soudanese fashion. Sir Austen saluted in return, and stepped on briskly. But the square, when he reached it, was alive with an eager throng of superior natives, both soldiers and civilians, in every possible stage of weariness and misery. A long siege had left its mark

on all. Famine stared visibly from every face. The gaunt Egyptians looked gaunter than ever: the stalwart negroes were worn to shadows. Among them the officer's quick eye was not long in picking out once more the still burly figure of his Irish friend Considine.

'What's up?' Sir Austen asked with considerable curiosity, forcing his way, not without some difficulty, through the buzzing throng. 'A deputation to Gordon?'

'Ye've hit it,' Considine answered lightly, with his accustomed easy, devil-may-care expression. 'The precise game. A dozen of the chief niggers are in conference with the Governor, and they want him to surrender at discretion this very morning. But they don't know Gordon. And from what I can guess of these fellows' lingo, I fancy Gordon don't see it in the same light as they do. They seem to me to be grumbling in their own tongue—which is a grand one for the purpose—and I can certainly answer for it that we've all of us got a right to grumble, for we're confoundedly hungry.'

As he spoke, an Arab a step or two in front turned round to them with an intelligent air, and smiled. Considine was the first to recognise who it was among the confused crowd of similar white Oriental dresses.

'Why, man, hanged if it isn't your cousin again!' he cried, with a sudden look at Sir Austen. 'Ah, but he's a splendid Arab! The devil himself wouldn't know him from a born Mussulman. Linnell, ye rascal, come here and tell us what the bother's all about. Ye can understand these niggers' unconscionable lingo. Tell us what the dickens the black fellows are haggling over.'

'Hush!' Linnell answered, coming over to them with an almost reverential air. 'Hush! He's going to speak. Let's hear what he says. I'll translate it all for you as well as I can afterwards.'

Something in the tone of his voice compelled attention. Considine and Sir Austen looked up at once, and saw standing on the steps of that whitewashed palace the well-known figure of a tall and commanding-looking man, in white European uniform and dark-red fez, that showed off to the utmost advantage the chastened

strength and majesty of his sunburnt face and grizzled moustaches. A buzz ran wave-like through the assembled crowd—a whispered buzz of 'Gordon! Gordon!' The Governor raised his right hand for a moment, palm outward, as if to bespeak silence; and all at once a sudden stillness fell like magic even upon that motley crowd of noisy, chattering Orientals. One second they surged like a summer sea; then they looked up eagerly. Every man held his face upturned to hear, as Kashim Elmoos, Gordon's most trusted native officer, called out loudly in Arabic: 'The Governor will address you.' But for some minutes the Governor himself only glanced round impressively with his deep-blue eyes: his silence and his look, all pity and resolution, seemed well-nigh as eloquent in their way as his soldierly language.

The crowd waited patiently, hanging upon his lips. Then Gordon, steadying himself with his hand on Kashim Elmoos's shoulder—for he was ill that day, and had been up all night making the round of the ramparts—gazed about him compassionately on that silent sea of eager black faces, and began to speak in rapid and fluent, but very clear and distinct, Arabic. Neither Sir Austen nor Considine could understand one word he said; but his winning smile, his cheery voice, his resolute manner, his quick cadences of emotion as he passed in turn from chiding to exhortation, made them almost able to follow in rough outline the general sense of what he was driving at. As for the straining mob of terrified Orientals, they hung upon his words in breathless silence, and stroked their chins, muttering now and then in concert, 'Allah is great. Gordon says well. He has faith to shame us. With Allah's help we shall hold out yet till hope comes of deliverance.'

But the Governor's face belied his confidence. As he went on with his speech, even in that dire extremity, some electric spark from the great man's heart seemed to run now and again through the entire assembly, so wonderfully did he inspire them all with the sense of personal devotion. They thrilled responsive. At one point, the Governor's voice sank low and musical.

'What's he saying to them now?' Considine asked in

an almost inaudible whisper of Linnell, unable any longer to repress his curiosity.

'He's telling them he feels it all, not for himself—not for his reputation—not even for England—but for his people's sake—these poor sheep of Soudanese, whom he has tried so hard to save and to benefit. If all is lost, it is for them that he grieves over it. Four long days and nights he has never slept nor closed his eye; he has gone round the posts incessantly, and personally encouraged his starved and wearied soldiers to stand firm till help arrives from Wolseley. The question of food, he says, has worn him to a shadow. He is hungry for his people. But all will yet go well. If they will but hold out for three days longer, Stewart's troops will be here: and for his part, come what may, he will never, never, never consent to surrender. *They* may give up the town if they like; that is *their* look-out; but he and we and Kashim Elmoos will die fighting to the last for God and duty.'

'Hooray!' Considine cried out enthusiastically, at the top of his voice; 'and so say all of us, too, General. We won't give way. We're with you, we're with you!'

Gordon looked down with a placid, child-like smile in the direction of the suddenly interrupting voice, and added in English loud and clear:

'My determination is unshaken. I will hold out to the end. England will never allow us to perish. But even if she does, we must do our duty.'

Sir Austen pressed his way up through the surging crowd, now loosed in speech once more, and eagerly discussing this last deliverance of their Governor's.

'I have news for him,' he murmured to Linnell, as they pressed forward together through the wearied throng; 'I believe help is nearer even than he supposes. We took a man prisoner this morning near the Bourré Gate, trying to make his way as close as he could as a spy. From what Abdul Ahmed, who examined him, tells me, I think he can be relied upon for giving truthful information.'

They reached the steps, and moved slowly up to where Gordon himself had now taken his seat in a wicker-chair on the platform of the palace. Occasional bullets still

whizzed past them with a whir; but the Governor nevertheless received his friends with that genial smile which never forsook him even in the last extremity.

'What goes at the gate, Linnell?' he asked, grasping Sir Austen's hand hard, and looking down into his very soul with those clear blue eyes of his. 'All well towards Bourré?'

'All well, as yet, I trust,' Sir Austen answered, trying his best to imitate his great leader's cheeriness. 'But we expect a determined assault to be made before long. We took a dervish prisoner this morning in the outer ditch, attempting, as I believe, to scale the rampart and communicate with Faragh——'

Gordon's eyes gleamed steely at the treacherous Pasha's name.

'Very likely!' he answered, with a quietly contemptuous air. 'Faragh can't be trusted. I made that man, and I know now, if he dared, he would willingly betray me. He has a cur's nature, I fear. But I'm not afraid of him. If we die, at least we have done our duty; though, even now, two hundred men would be enough to save us—two hundred Englishmen, of Probyn or Burnaby's sort. With their help we could hold out for another twelvemonth. Well, how about your prisoner?'

Sir Austen smiled back at that calm, heroic face of a great man struggling with a sea of adversity.

'My prisoner tells us,' he went on, in a very quiet voice, 'that the Mahdi has news of a severe defeat of his northern detachment on Saturday week by Stewart's troops at Abu Klea. He understands that Stewart himself is wounded and dead, but that his column has succeeded in reaching Metamneh. The dervish tells us that the army of relief made a reconnaissance in force at Metamneh on Wednesday, aided by our four steamers, which he seems to think have effected a junction with them; and he says that in the Mahdi's camp everyone is of opinion an assault must be made not later than Tuesday on all available points, for fear the army of relief should arrive by Wednesday or Thursday.'

The Governor listened to this exciting news with profound interest.

'My own information looks the same way,' he murmured, with that imperturbable calm of a brave spirit. 'Depend upon it, we are only three or four days off now from our deliverance. I have wrestled with this trouble in prayer, and it is passing away. It is passing away, I feel certain; but which way it will pass away, we can't tell yet. My grief is all for my poor starved people. I believe our steamers must really have met Stewart's detachment. But that makes our danger all the greater for the moment. Everything depends upon the next four days. The Mahdi's too good a strategist, you may be sure, not to know his one chance of success lies in preventing a junction. The nearer help comes to us, the more eager the enemy will be to hasten his assault. He'll attack us to-night, I believe—he'll attack before morning. I must see your prisoner, Sir Austen. Where have you left him?'

'At the Bourré Gate,' Sir Austen answered respectfully, 'in charge of Ali Ismail.'

At the words the General, like a wounded man, sprang from his seat astounded.

'In charge of Ali Ismail!' he cried, with an incredulous air. 'Why, Colonel, you surprise me! The man's a spy, of course, who came near on purpose, hoping to be taken, that he might communicate with Faragh. And you've left him in charge of one of Faragh's own most intimate officers! Why, what could you have been thinking about? In a man less experienced and less trustworthy than yourself, I should be inclined to call this culpable negligence! Depend upon it, the fellow has a message from the Mahdi. By this time he's arranged things comfortably with Faragh, no doubt. And the worst of it is, we don't know whom to trust. We must go down at once and try to prevent any further mischief.'

Sir Austen clapped his hand to his head in horror.

'Great heavens!' he cried, with a sudden burst of enlightenment, 'I must be mad! I never even thought of it!'

The General, never chiding him, moved down the steps with a resolute air.

'This is bad news,' he said quietly—'very bad news indeed. I've heard none worse through all this day of trial. I distrust Faragh, and I don't know how many of his subordinates may be implicated with him. If we had only the enemy to deal with, we might hold out for weeks; but with traitors in the camp—starvation and treachery to cope with at once—God alone knows now what may happen next to us. And when we fall, they will treat my poor people as these wretches treated the defenceless souls in Berber.'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END.

EARLY next morning, about three o'clock, as Linnell was dozing uneasily in his bed, on the second floor of an old Arab house not far from the Bourré Gate, a strange sound and tumult in the city awoke him suddenly. It wasn't the mere ordinary fusillade or boom of the batteries; he could sleep through that quite carelessly now. It was something out of the common. He rose, and opened the latticed window to explore the mystery. Looking out across the flat roofs, a fierce red glare met his eyes to eastward. Something up undoubtedly! Heavy firing was going on along the Blue Nile line, in the dead of night, in the direction of Bourré.

At the very same moment, even as he looked and wondered, an answering red glare burst up like flame towards the sky on the west, along the White Nile front, in the direction of Messalamieh. Heavy firing was going on in that quarter too. A horrible din seemed to grow upon his ears as he stood and listened. It was plain the enemy had assaulted in force—and from two sides at once. The end had come at last! The Mahdi must be making his final attempt on Khartoum!

With a tremor of awe, Linnell rose hastily and put on his Arab dress as usual. Then he took his field-glass in his hand, and stepped out upon the flat white roof of the tumble-down villa. His quarters were in one of the

highest houses in the whole town, from whose top terrace he could command the entire Messalamieh district. Gazing in that direction, he saw at once, by the red glare of the fire and the white light of dawn, a number of swarthy clambering objects that swarmed and clustered over the rampart by the Messalamieh Gate. They looked like black ants, at such a dim distance, seen through the field-glass against the pale white wall of the fortifications; but Linnell knew in a second they were really naked black Soudanese soldiers, creeping one by one into the doomed city. They had filled up the ditch below with bundles of straw and palm-branch brushwood, and were escalading the wall prone on their bellies now, like so many cats or crawling insects!

At one glance he took it all in, that awful truth, in its full horror and ghastly significance. Those crouching black barbarians had almost carried the gate by this time, and in half an hour more the town would be gutted and given over to indiscriminate slaughter and rapine. Only those who have seen the black man at his worst can tell what nameless horrors that phrase encloses.

But before Linnell had time to make up his mind which way to go, or where duty most called him, another wild shout surged up simultaneously from the Bourré Gate, and another red glare burst fiercer and wilder than ever towards the pale expanse of tropical heaven.

The startled European turned his glass in the direction of the new noise, but saw no naked black bodies scaling the walls over in that quarter. The cry and din towards Bourré came all, it seemed, from well *within* the gate. The mad red glare that burst up anew to the sky was in the city itself. Then Linnell knew at once what had happened on that side. Faragh Pasha had betrayed them! The game was up! His creatures had basely opened the eastern gate! The Mahdi's wild gang was already within the beleaguered city!

In that awful hour, every European heart in Khartoum was stirred by but one thought. To the palace! To the palace! To die defending Gordon!

With a throbbing bosom, the painter hurried down the stairs of that crazy old native house and rushed out into

the deserted streets of the city. The gray light of dawn and the red reflected glare of burning houses illuminated together the narrow tangled alleys. The minarets of the crumbling old mosque across the way stood out in pale pink against the lurid red background. But not a soul was to be seen in the deserted lane. Though the din and tumult rose fiercer and ever fiercer from the two main assaulted points, the silence in the empty houses on either side was almost death-like. For most of the Mussulman inhabitants had quitted the town three weeks earlier, by the Mahdi's permission, leaving few non-combatants within that doomed precinct; and the handful that remained were now cowering in their own gloomy little sunless bedchambers, waiting for the successful tide of negro savagery to burst in and massacre them like sheep in a slaughter-house.

Linnell girded up his burnous forthwith, and ran at all speed through the empty streets in the direction of the palace. As he neared that central point of the entire city, crowds of natives, Egyptian officials, black Soudanese soldiers, and terrified Arabs, were all hurrying for safety towards the Governor's headquarters. It was a general *sauve qui peut;* all thought of their own skins, and few of organized resistance. Still, at the very moment when Linnell turned into the great square, a small body of Nubian troops were being drawn up in line, to make for the Bourré Gate, where the enemy was thickest. Sir Austen stood at their head, and recognised his cousin.

'Well, it has come at last, Charlie,' he said, with a solemn nod. 'The black brutes are upon us in real earnest. This means massacre now, for my poor fellows are far too hungry, and too exhausted as well, to make anything like a decent resistance. We shall all be killed. Save yourself while you can. In that dress nobody'd ever take you for a moment for a European. Slink back into the crowd, and when the Mahdi's people break upon you, give in your submission, and accept the prophet.'

'Never!' Linnell cried, placing himself in line by his cousin's side, and pulling out his revolver. 'If we must sell our lives, we'll sell them dearly, at any rate, in defence of Gordon.'

And, without another word, they made for the Bourré Gate in awful silence.

As they reached the actual scene of the fighting, or rather of the slaughter—for the worn-out defenders were too weary by far to strike a blow, even for dear life—a horrible sight met the Englishmen's eyes. No words could describe that ghastly field of carnage. It was an orgy of death, a wild, savage carmagnole of blood and murder. A perfect sea of naked black-skinned African fanatics had poured through the open gate into the battered town, and was rushing resistlessly now through all its tortuous lanes and alleys. With hideous cries and bloodstained hands, they burst shrieking upon their defenceless enemies, who fled before them like sheep, or stood to be shot or sabred with Oriental meekness. Every form of weapon was there, from savage club to civilized rifle, and all were wielded alike with deadly but reckless exultation of barbarism. Linnell had never in his life seen so awful a picture of slaughter and desolation. The fanatics, as they swept forward, headed by their naked dervishes with blood-begrimed locks, shouted aloud in Arabic, or in their own guttural Central African dialects, fierce prayers to Allah for aid, and savage imprecations of divine wrath on the accursed heads of the Mahdi's enemies. Neither man, woman, nor child was spared in that first fiery onslaught; whoever they met at close quarters they ran through with their bayonets or their long native spears; whoever they saw flying at a distance, they fired at with their rifles in wild confusion.

One fierce band of dervishes in red loin-cloths made straight along the street towards Sir Austen's little party.

'Kill, kill, kill!' the black fanatic at their head shouted aloud to his followers in his deep Arabic tones, stretching his bare arms heavenwards: 'Jehad! Jehad! The prophet promises Paradise to all who die to-day in the cause of Islam. Slay, in the name of Allah and the prophet; slay, in the name of the Mahdi, his servant!'

As he spoke, a bullet from Sir Austen's revolver whizzed hissing across the intervening space, and passed like lightning clean through his naked body. The red

blood spurted out in a gush from the open wound; but the man pressed on regardless of the shot, for all that. By some strange chance, the bullet had missed any vital part; and the dervish, clapping his open hand to the spot for a moment, and then holding up his palm, dripping red with his own blood, before his frenzied followers, cried out once more, in still wilder accents:

'Kill, kill, kill! and inherit heaven. See, the blood of the faithful is your standard to-day! My children, Allah has given us Khartoum for our own. Who live, shall divide the women of the infidels. Who die, shall sup to-night with the houris in Paradise!'

With one fierce shout of 'Jehad! Jehad!' the black wave, thus encouraged, swept resistlessly onward, each man tumbling over his neighbour in his eager haste to inherit the blessing. Their red eyes gleamed bright in the glare of the fires; their long matted curls of woolly hair blew loose about their thick bull necks in wild and horrible confusion. A mingled gleam of spears, and short swords, and firearms, and naked black thighs, seemed to dance all at once before Linnell's vision. Huge African hands, begrimed with smoke, and spattered over with stains of blood and powder, wielded Remingtons and bayonets and savage native weapons in incongruous juxtaposition. It was all hell let loose, with incarnate devils rushing fiercely on, drunk with slaughter and mad with excitement. Sir Austen himself stood firm, like a practised soldier.

'Fix bayonets!' he cried, as they broke against his line. But his little band of weary and siege-worn Nubians faltered visibly before the shock of that terrible onslaught. 'We must fall back,' he whispered, half under his breath, to his cousin, forgetful that his men couldn't have understood even if they heard his English; 'but at least we can fall back in good order on the palace, with our faces to the enemy, and die with Gordon!'

At the word, Linnell waved his right hand wildly above his head, and turning to the little band of trained Nubian allies, cried out in Arabic:

'Stand to your ground, men, and retreat like soldiers. We go to die with Gordon Pasha!'

The Nubians answered with a feeble cry of assent, and fell back a pace or two.

Then their assailants burst in upon them with a frantic yell of triumph.

'Infidels, sink down to hell!' the dervish shouted at their head in a voice of thunder; and leaping into the air, fell himself as he spoke, riddled through the body by a second bullet from Sir Austen's six-shooter. His followers paused for some seconds as they saw their captain's blood spatter the ground: then another naked warrior, one-armed and one-eyed, with a rifle of the newest Woolwich pattern brandished madly in his hand, and a bundle of strange charms, for all clothing, hung loose round his neck, sprang forward with a bound and took the fallen leader's place in quick succession. Waving the broken stump of his left arm excitedly round his head, he cheered on his horde, drunk with haschisch and fanaticism, to attack the infidels and inherit Paradise!

Step by step and corner by corner, Sir Austen and his little body of faithful adherents fought their way back, retreating all the time, but with faces to the foe, through the narrow alleys and covered bazaar, in the direction of the palace. As they went, their number grew ever smaller and smaller; one weary Nubian after another fell dying on the ground, and the Mahdi's men rushed fiercely with bare feet over his prostrate body. Now and again, a stray shot was fired at the assailants by an unseen friend on some neighbouring house-top; but, on the other hand, as the defenders retreated slowly and in good order before the overwhelming force of the foe, their enemy grew each moment more numerous and more audacious. Black warriors swarmed down the narrow lanes from every side like ants from an ant-hill. Religious frenzy and the thirst for blood had driven the dervishes mad with frantic excitement. Their thick lips showed blue with congested blood; their eyes started from their sockets; great drops of sweat poured down their naked breasts and limbs; even those that dropped, stabbed through with bayonet thrusts, and those that flung themselves in their frenzy on the serried line of the retreating

defenders, cried aloud to Allah with foaming mouths as they fell to revenge his Prophet, and the Mahdi, his servant, on the cursed dogs of infidels who had sent them to Paradise before their time.

It was hot work. Linnell's brain reeled with it. Their faces ever to the foe, and their bayonets fixed, the little band fell back, a step at a time, disputing every inch of that narrow pathway. At last they reached the great square of the town, where already other hordes of the frenzied fanatics were engaged in a ghastly and indiscriminate slaughter of all whom they came across. In the far corner, by the wall, a little band of terrified Greek women, the wives of merchants who had refused to flee before communications were cut off, crouched all huddled together near the Etat Major buildings, where some faithful black troops were endeavouring in vain to guard and protect them. Even as Linnell looked, the Mahdi's men burst in upon the poor creatures with a headlong rush, and swept away the soldiers with their deadly onslaught. One unhappy girl they actually hacked to pieces before his very eyes, tossing her head in derision as soon as they had finished on to the flat roof of a neighbouring whitewashed building. The rest they drove before them with their spears into the further corner, where a fierce band of dervishes with grinning white teeth was already beginning to collect a living booty of women; while a second horde of marauders, turning fresh upon Sir Austen's own tiny company of worn and wearied negroes, rushed fiercely upon them with a loud cry of 'Mashallah; death to the infidel!'

Sir Austen gave the word to his men, in his scanty Arabic:

'To the palace! To the palace! Quick march! Keep order! There's nothing to fight for now,' he added in English to his cousin, 'but to save Gordon from unnecessary torture.'

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FALL OF KHARTOUM.

It was no longer possible to keep up any semblance, even, of a regular line. The scanty body of famished and wearied survivors fell back in a hasty and broken rout towards the steps of the palace. The Mahdi's men, following them up at a run, like a troop of hungry wolves upon a defenceless sheepfold, shouted louder than ever, and fell in murderous little groups, with discordant cries of triumph, on every man who stumbled or lagged behind in the scurry.

The confusion was horrible. Linnell's brain whirled with it. Fresh swarms seemed now to break in upon the square by every lane and street and alley, like kites that swoop down from all sides upon some wounded jackal. One seething, surging mass of black savage humanity occupied the square with shrieks and imprecations. Some hung like bees on the flat roofs of the houses around, and kept up a desultory fire from their rifles on the stragglers below; others pressed on with Mohammedan ardour towards the palace itself, where a small band of famished defenders still held out at bay round the sacred person of their revered Governor.

As Linnell and his cousin reached the steps, a little line of faithful blacks formed an alley down the terrace, and a tall, spare figure clad in white European uniform stood forth, to grasp Sir Austen's hand in solemn silence.

For a moment nobody spoke a word. All speech was useless. Then the Governor looked around him with a pathetic look of infinite pity.

'My poor, poor children!' he cried, gazing sadly on that wild orgy of fire and slaughter. 'I came to save them from the stick, the lash, and the prison. I did my best to protect them. But it was ordained otherwise. I have lived whole years in this last long fortnight. Not for ourselves, Sir Austen—not for ourselves, indeed—but for them I feel it.' Then after a short pause he added slowly: 'And what a disappointment, too—when they come up—for Stewart and Wolseley!'

Even in that final moment of defeat and death, the hero's first thought was for the feelings of others.

Linnell stepped forward and grasped the Governor's hand in turn.

'We will all die with you,' he cried with profound emotion. It was easy enough, indeed, for him. He had nothing left on earth to live for.

And yet—and yet, now that death stood staring him in the face, he would have given worlds that moment for one last word with Psyche.

'We'll meet them here, Pasha, I suppose?' Sir Austen said, trying to rally his few remaining men on the steps. 'You will die at your post, as a soldier ought to do.'

'No, not here,' the Governor answered, with his quiet smile. 'My duty lies elsewhere. I had thought once, if Khartoum fell in God's good time, of blowing the palace up, with all that was in it. But I see more wisely now. I elect rather, with God's help, to die standing. Besides, we must make an effort at least to save Hansel. He has sent to me for help. He holds out in the consulate. I must go and meet him.'

Hansel was the Austrian consul, whose house lay not far off down one of the neighbouring narrow alleys. To attempt to reach it was certain death; but, still, the attempt must be made, for all that. Some twenty black Egyptian soldiers, with Kashim Elmoos at their head, still rallied feebly round the adored Governor. They started on their last march, that little forlorn-hope, fighting their way boldly across the open square, now one wild scene of havoc, and keeping together in a compact mass, with Gordon at their head, leading the party bravely. Only once the Governor paused on the way to speak to Sir Austen.

'Better a ball in the brain, after all,' he said quietly, 'than to flicker out at home in bed unheeded.'

Near the corner, a fresh body of dervishes rushed upon them down a side-street. The Governor halted at once and drew his sword. Sir Austen endeavoured to fling himself in front of him.

'For heaven's sake, sir,' he cried, in an eager voice, 'fall back among the men! These wretches recognise

you! Unless you fall back, you're a dead man, and our one last hope is gone for ever.'

For even then he could hardly believe that Gordon would be unsuccessful.

But the Governor waved him back with that authoritative hand that no man on earth ever dared to disobey.

'March on!' he said in a military voice unshaken by fear. 'I know my duty. We must go to Hansel's.'

Before the words were well out of his mouth, a volley of musketry rang loud in their ears. A rain of bullets rang against the wall behind. Linnell was aware of a strange dull feeling in his left arm. Something seemed to daze him. For a moment he shut his eyes involuntarily. When he opened them again, and steadied himself with an effort, he saw a hideous sight in the square beside him. Gordon's body was lying, pierced by three bullets, bleeding profusely on the dusty ground. And half the Egyptians lay huddled dead around him.

What followed next, Linnell hardly knew. He was dimly conscious of a terrible swoop, a cry of wild triumph, a loud tumultuous yell of diabolical vengeance. The naked black warriors fell upon the body of their famous enemy like ants upon the carcase of a wounded insect. A great wave of assailants carried Linnell himself resistlessly before them. He felt himself whirled through the midst of the square once more, and carried by the press up the steps of the palace. His cousin was still by his side, he knew; but that was all. They two alone remained of the defenders of Khartoum. No trace of resistance was left anywhere. The whole town was given over now to indiscriminate massacre.

All round, the smoke and heat of a great conflagration went up to heaven in blinding mist from the ruins of charred and blackened houses. Men and women were running and crying for their lives; black ruffians were seizing young girls in their brawny arms, and carrying them off, struggling, to places of temporary safety. All the horrors of a sack by victorious barbarians were being enacted visibly before his very eyes. The scene was too confused to yield any definite sensation, and great red drops were oozing copiously from Linnell's wounded

arm, which he had bound round now with a fragment of his burnous. He almost fainted with pain and loss of blood. Just at that moment, a naked black fanatic, with a blunted sabre lifted high in the air, seized him violently by the shoulder.

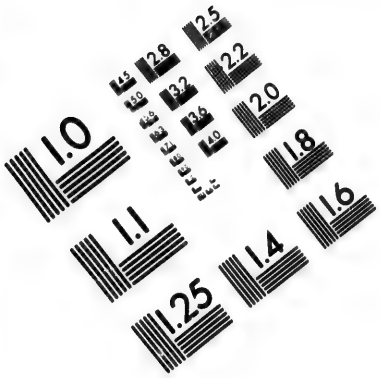
'Are you for Allah and the Mahdi, or for the infidel?' he cried in broken African Arabic.

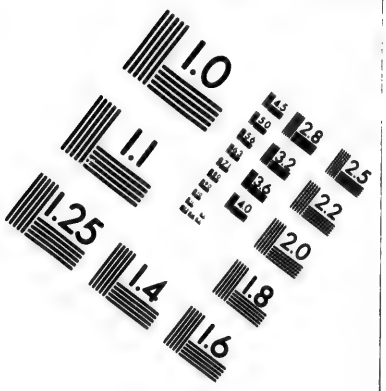
'I am for Gordon and the English!' Linnell answered with spirit, flinging the man away from him in the wild energy of despair, and drawing his knife, for he had no cartridges left. 'Lay your hand on me again, and, by God, I'll send your wicked black soul to judgment!'

Sir Austen by his side tried to draw his sword feebly. Then for the first time Linnell observed in his flurry that his cousin, too, was seriously wounded.

The sight of an infidel in European uniform who dared to offer resistance, and of a man in Arab dress who drew a knife to defend him, brought whole squads of marauders to the spot in a moment. Another horrible rush took place in their direction. Once more there was a loud noise as of a volley of musketry. Once more smoke and fire flashed suddenly before Linnell's eyes. The unhappy man saw Sir Austen fling up his hands aloft in the air and heard him give a loud wild cry. Then he knew himself that blood was trickling again from his own right breast. The rest was dim, very dim indeed. Big savages pressed on up the steps of the palace. Sir Austen was lying like a log by his side. Naked black feet trampled him down irresistibly. A fellow with a bayonet seemed to thrust him through a third time. Linnell knew he was weltering in a great pool of blood. The din grew dimmer and still dimmer all round. Light faded. The consciousness of the outer world melted slowly away. All was over. Khartoum was taken, Gordon was dead. Sir Austen lay stark and stiff by his side. He himself was dying—dying—dying. Numb coldness spread over him. And then a great silence.

But that morning at Khartoum, for six long hours, the city was given over to massacre and rapine. The men were slaughted and stripped of everything they pos-





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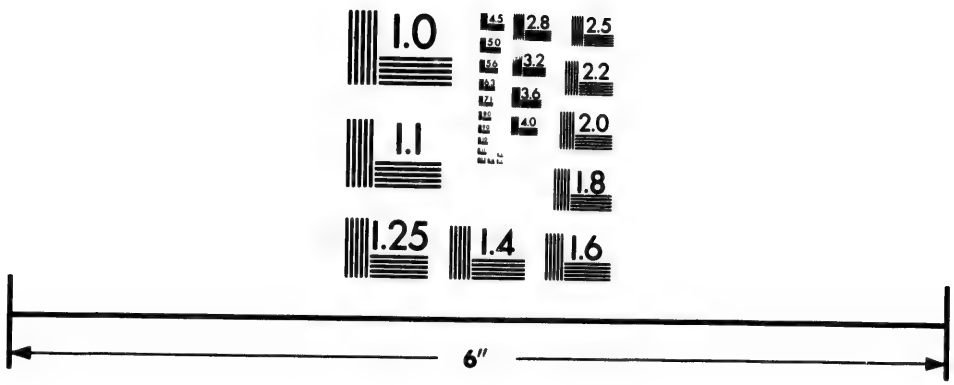

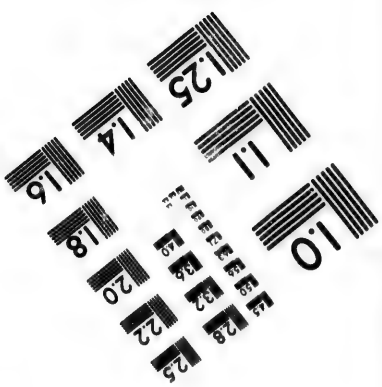

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sessed, the women were hailed off and divided as booty. Four thousand of the townspeople lay rotting in the streets under a tropical sun. At least as many Egyptian and Soudanese soldiers were bayoneted by the fanatics in cold blood. And Gordon's headless body cried out to heaven for mercy on his murderers from a corner of the square by the gate of the palace.

So much, we all learned long after in England.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN HOUR OF TRIUMPH.

At Petherton, during all that fearful time, how closely Psyche had followed the march of events; how carefully she reckoned the chances of war; how eagerly she watched the slow advance of the relieving force up the Nile to Dongola and across the desert to Abu Klea and Metamneh! Early in the morning, before even Dumaresq came down to his Spartan breakfast, Psyche was already scanning with anxious eyes the *Times* or *Daily News* she hardly held in her trembling fingers. When papa went out on the Downs for his mid-day walk, Psyche brought forth the big atlas from the study shelf, and pen in hand, pounced down, all eagerness, on those strange unknown names, fixing for herself with minute care the exact spot where Wolseley had last arrived, or the utmost point on the wide blank of sand yet reached by Stewart with his desert advance-guard. Here they camped last night: there they go to-morrow. Love had turned the pink-and-white maiden unawares into an amateur tactician of the first water. She read with more than military fervour the latest views of distinguished authorities as to the chances of the Camel Corps; the conflicting opinions of newspaper scribes as to the tactical value of Beresford's Naval Brigade. General Maitland himself could not have been more eager as to the possible merits of the mounted infantry; the very War Office could hardly have been more excited when the van of the relief party arrived at Gakdul.

And all this in the silence of her own heart! For

Psyche did not dare to confide in anyone. When she heard papa's footstep on the gravel path outside, or Ida Mansel's voice by the garden gate, the atlas was hurriedly thrust back into its place on the shelf, the *Daily News* was carefully folded away in the rack by the fireplace, the tears were hastily brushed from those clouded eyes, and the poor self-restrained girl came back at one bound from Khartoum or Dongola to Petherton Episcopi. No one but herself knew with what anxiety she followed every move in that terrible and protracted game; no one but herself knew how often, as she gazed at that hopeless map with its impassable stretches of desert sand and its long curves of interminable Nile, names and places faded suddenly from her failing eyes, and a vast blank alone rose up visible before her—a mingled blank of despair and blindness.

Now and again, to be sure, there were gleams of hope. It was not all pure unmixed despondency. On New Year's Day, for example, came a message, a glorious message, from Gordon to the relieving force: 'Khartoum all right on the 14th of December.' A fortnight ago, then, Psyche thought with a thrill, Linnell was safe; but, ah, how many things may happen in a fortnight! Yet even so, that cheery message, despatched by a brave man in stifled despair, brightened up her New Year not a little. For a full week afterwards her sight never suddenly failed her unawares; she walked with a firmer and a freer tread; there was still hope, for Stewart's force was now well on the way for Metamneh. Then came the flicker of victory at the Abu Klea wells—why, now they were almost at the gates of Khartoum. How very short a distance it looked on the map! Psyche measured it carefully by the scale of miles with a pin and some thread: her heart sank within her when she found the result! How many days' journey, how many days' journey, if one came to look at it by that sterner method!

On the 22nd another message arrived from Gordon: 'Khartoum all right. Could hold out for years.' Her heart bounded with joy within her as she read. All would yet be well—and Linnell would come home again.

When Linnell came home, she would tell him all.

She could stand it no longer, this misery of misinterpretation. She would ask her father to release her from her promise, that horrible promise that had wrought so much harm. She would fling herself freely, for all her pride, on her painter's neck, and with tears and entreaties beg him to forgive her. A Dumaresq as she was, she would beg him to forgive her.

The end of January, though full of suspense, was indeed a happy time in anticipation for Psyche. Everything was going on so well at the front. The relief of Khartoum was now all but accomplished. Day after day came brighter news. Gordon's four steamers, sent down the Nile to assist Wolseley, had united with the expeditionary force at Metamneh. Then all was still safe in the beleaguered city. Sir Charles Wilson had started for Khartoum; in three days more the siege would be raised—the siege would be raised, and Linnell would be free again! The whole world of England had its eyes fixed during that period of suspense on one man alone; to Psyche, too, there was but one man in all Khartoum, and that man was—not Gordon, but the Special Artist of the *Porte-Crayon* newspaper.

On a Wednesday afternoon towards the end of the month, Ida Mansel stopped with her pony-carriage in front of the Wren's Nest gate, and called out to Psyche, who was busy in the drawing-room, to come in with her that minute to Melbury.

Psyche flung down her needlework at once. Melbury was the nearest country town, and she was delighted indeed to have such a chance; for the evening papers could be bought at Melbury. Every hour was of breathless importance now: nobody knew how soon tidings might arrive of the relief of Khartoum. She would buy a *Pall Mall*, or a *St. James's*, at Melbury: she would get the latest news, that way, twelve hours earlier. So she hurried on her hat and jacket anyhow, and rushed out in haste to Ida.

It was a lovely afternoon, and the sun was shining. Such a January day Psyche scarcely remembered. The hedgerows were bright with hips and haws; the feathery streamers of the clematis, or old man's beard, as village

children call it, festooned the bare boughs with their flower-like fluffiness; the chirping of robins from the shelter of the holly bushes made her almost forget it was the depth of winter. Rooks cawed from the rookery in cheerful content; young lambs already bleated from the pasture-land. Everything spoke of spring and hope. And Psyche's heart was glad within her; for had not England sent out help to her painter? Was not an army well on its way, all to bring her lover back to her at Petherton?

For the very first time, as they drove along through the brisk clear air, Psyche ventured to broach the subject that lay nearest her heart to Ida Mansel. 'Do you think,' she asked timidly, with a deep blush, 'there's any chance—we might hear to-day—that they've relieved Khartoum?'

Mrs. Mansel was in her most oracular Girtonian mood.

'Perhaps,' she answered vaguely, flicking the pony's ear, 'and perhaps not. But, for my part, it simply surprises me to find how much importance everybody attaches to the particular question whether this one man, Gordon—estimable person, no doubt, in his own way, but one among ten million—does or does not happen to get shot in an expedition on which he volunteered for the express purpose of going to shoot other people. To my mind, the interest the world displays in his fate smacks of provincialism.'

Psyche, with her poor heart fluttering wit[illegible] was not disposed to contest this abstract proposition.

'But there are so many more people in Khartoum with him!' she ventured to interpose, her thoughts all full of one among that nameless, unthought-of number.

'So there are many thousand estimable Chinamen dying every day in Pekin, I believe,' Mrs. Mansel answered with chilly persistence. 'It seems to me irrational, in a world where hundreds must die daily of endless misfortunes, to make so much fuss over a few dozen Englishmen, more or less, who've sought their own death over yonder in Central Africa.'

'Perhaps you'd feel it more if you were personally interested in any one of them,' Psyche ventured to

suggest, very tentatively, though her heart misgave her for even trenching so far on the dangerous question.

'That's just it, you see,' Mrs. Mansel replied, with philosophic calm, replacing her whip in its stand carefully. 'As it happens, we *have* a friend out there ourselves, you know. Mr. Linnell—you remember, that nice young man who was here in the summer, and who painted your portrait and your father's too—has gone out to Khartoum; and you recollect he's a very old chum indeed of Reginald's. Reginald's very much concerned at times about him. But what I say is, if *we*, who have acquaintances actually in danger there, don't make any unnecessary noise or fuss about it—if we're content to look on and watch and wait to see what time and chance will do for them—why should all the rest of the world go crying and shrieking and wringing their hands in wild despair, like a pack of children, about Gordon and his companions, who are the merest names to them? War's an outlet for our surplus population. It replaces the plagues of the Middle Ages. There are plenty more soldiers where those came from.'

The tears stood full in Psyche's eyes, though with a violent effort she held them back. But she could talk no more about Khartoum after that. 'Mr. Linnell, you remember, who painted your portrait,' indeed! As if *she* could forget—as if *she* could forget him! Oh, strange irony of accidental coincidence! How little she knew—how little she understood poor Psyche's sorrow!

They drove on into Melbury in silence almost, and up the long, white High Street, stopping at the grocer's and the wine-merchant's and the draper's, till at last they reached the one shop in the place that had now any interest for poor eager Psyche—the bookseller and news-agent's. There were no placards displayed outside the door as usual. Mrs. Mansel pulled up the pony at the door and let Psyche jump out.

'Have the evening papers come in yet?' Psyche asked, trembling.

'No, miss,' the shopman answered, with glib unconcern; 'they're a little late. Behind time this evening; but *Punch* is to hand, if you'd like to look at it.'

Psyche took it up in a vague, uncertain, half-dreamy way. *Punch* for *her* indeed! What sarcasm—what irony! Of how much interest to her were its jokes and its caricatures now, with Linnell imprisoned by that mob of fierce fanatic blacks in Khartoum! She opened the paper, hardly knowing what she did. It almost fell from her hands in her intense excitement. Oh, heavens! what was this? A terrible joy burst over her as she looked. The cartoon was a picture of two weather-stained soldiers shaking hands together amid loud huzzas and tossing-up of caps, while a body of faithful Egyptian and negro allies looked on from behind and shared in the universal rejoicing of their deliverers. Underneath was the simple legend, 'At Last!' Remote as Psyche lived from the great world of men and events, she took in at a glance what the picture meant. Love sharpened her senses to read it aright. She recognised even the faces of the two leading men. One of them was Wilson; the other, Gordon.

Then all was well! Khartoum was relieved! The steamers with the Sussex regiment on board — those steamers whose course she had followed so anxiously— must have run the gauntlet of the Mahdi's fire, and succeeded in forcing their way up the Nile to the besieged city. Wilson had thrown himself into Khartoum at last, and Linnell would now come back to England.

All England was thinking of Gordon that night— Psyche was thinking only of her artist lover.

She turned, on fire, and laying threepence hastily down on the counter, rushed out of the shop with her priceless treasure in her hands, all trembling. At the door space disappeared for a moment before her swimming eyes, but she cared nothing at all for all that now. What was blindness itself with Linnell safe? She groped her way, with her precious paper in her hand, to Ida Mansel's pony-trap, and in a second, as the wave of joy passed through her once more, she saw again as distinctly as ever she had seen in all her life, for no tonic on earth can equal happiness.

'Mrs. Mansel!' she cried, 'he's safe, he's safe! They relieved Khartoum, and defeated the Mahdi!'

'Who's safe?' Mrs. Mansel repeated, half incredulous.

And Psyche, too proudly honest to answer 'Gordon,' replied with a scarcely conscious blush:

'Why, your friend Mr. Linnell! I'm so glad to hear it!'

Ida Mansel took the paper sceptically from the girl's hand. It was that all too historical number of *Punch* with the famous cartoon, so soon to be falsified, representing the supposed junction of Wilson's reinforcements with the handful of defenders still left with Gordon; and, as everybody now knows, it was prepared beforehand, as such things must always necessarily be prepared, in anticipation of the shortly-expected triumph of that futile relief party. But neither Psyche nor her friend was critical enough to reflect, in their womanlike haste, that the drawing and the block must have been put in hand, at the very latest, several hours before the arrival of the last telegrams in that morning's papers. They were not critical enough to remember that *Punch*, with all its acknowledged virtues and excellences, has never laid any claim of any sort to rank as an independent purveyor and dispenser of authentic intelligence. They accepted the hypothetical announcement of the cartoon in good faith as so much honest comment upon established fact, and they made no doubt in their own minds that in London that evening the news of Gordon's safety was common property.

Oh, glorious, short-lived, inexpressible delight! Oh, sudden release of tense heart-strings! Oh, instant relief from unutterable suspense! Psyche drove back to Petherton beside herself with joy. Linnell was safe, and she would see him again. She had no fear now that he might have died or been killed during the siege. Some supreme internal faith told her plainly that all was well. England had wasted money like water and sacrificed lives by the thousand in the desert, all to bring Psyche back her painter: and now, in the very hour of the country's triumph, should any base doubt dare to obtrude itself on her happy mind that all was in vain, and that her painter was missing? No, no, a thousand times over, no! Not thus are the events of the cosmos ordered. Psyche *knew* he was safe; she *knew* he would come back again.

The robins in the hedge chirped merrier than ever as they two drove back in high glee to Petherton. The sun in the sky shone bright and spring-like; the waves on the sea shimmered like diamonds. Everything was gay and blithe and happy. For Linnell was safe, and Psyche was herself again.

And in many an English home that night sad hearts were mourning for their loved ones at Khartoum.

CHAPTER XXV.

AND AFTER.

At the garden-gate Haviland Dumaresq met them, with that strange, far-away look in his wandering eye which, as Psyche knew—though she knew not the cause—surely and certainly foreboded headache. His glance was dim, and his step unsteady. At sight of them, however, he roused himself with an effort; and raising his hat with that stately old-fashioned courtesy of his, which gave something of princeliness to Haviland Dumaresq's demeanour at all times, he invited Mrs. Mansel to leave the pony standing at the gate, while she came in herself for a cup of tea in their little drawing-room.

'He won't stand,' Ida said; 'but perhaps I can tie him;' and with Dumaresq's help she proceeded to do so.

Psyche could no longer contain her news.

'Papa, papa,' she cried, 'have you heard what's happened? It's all right! Khartoum's relieved, and—Mr. Linnell's safe again!'

It was the first time since the painter's departure that she had so much as mentioned his name to her father. Haviland Dumaresq started with surprise at the unexpected sound, and at Psyche's blushes. The news seemed to rouse him and quicken his dulled sense. The far-away look died out from his eyes, as he answered with a gasp that to Psyche said much:

'I'm glad to hear it—very glad to hear it. That young man's danger has weighed upon my soul not a little of late. I've thought at times perhaps I might

have been in some degree answerable for having sent him out on that fool's errand; but all's well that ends well, thank goodness. Military events matter little as a rule to such as me. The silly persons by whose aid kings and statesmen play their deadly game of skill against one another count for not much individually on the stage of history. We reckon them by the head—so many hundreds or so many thousands swept off the board. Well, what's the next move? Check, Kaiser! check, Sultan! But with this young man it was a different matter. He had burst into our horizon and crossed our orbits. The comet that swims once distinctly into your ken interests you far more than the crowd of meteors that career unseen through the infinity of heaven.' He rang the bell for the one tidy maid-of-all-work. 'Maria, tea!' he said with a lordly gesture, in the voice in which a sovereign might give commands for an imperial banquet to chamberlains and seneschals.

'The Government must be infinitely relieved at this success,' Mrs. Mansel remarked, trying to break the current of the subject; for this narrow and somewhat provincial insistence upon the fate of the one young man whom they all happened to know personally vexed her righteous Girtonian soul by its want of expansiveness. Why harp for ever on a single human life, when population tends always to increase in a geometrical ratio beyond the means of subsistence?

'Yes,' Dumaresq echoed, away up among the clouds still, but bringing back the pendulum with a rush to Linnell once more. 'No doubt; no doubt—and I'm relieved myself. I, too, had sent my own private Gordon to the Soudan unawares; and it's cost me no little in mental expeditions to raise the siege and release him unconditionally. But no matter now, no matter now; it's all over. He'll come back before long, and then I'll be able to pay him at last for the portrait he thrust upon me, uncommissioned, before leaving England.'

Psyche glanced up at it where it hung on the wall—that portrait of her father that she had so loved and watched through these weary long months—that portrait into which, as she often fancied, Linnell had poured the

whole strength and energy of his pent-up nature. Ida Mansel's eyes followed hers to the picture.

'It's a most striking piece of work, certainly,' the Girton-bred lady remarked with condescending grace. 'Not niggled and over-elaborated, like so many of Mr. Linnell's performances. As a rule, our friend seems to me to walk backwards and forwards too much while he's painting a canvas. I often advised him to sit more still. If you watch any of the great masters at work, I always say, you'll see them seated so close at their easels, and so certain of the value of every particular touch, that they never need to look at the total effect they're producing at all. That's art: that's the master's way of working. Corot said there were certain pictures of his which he never really saw in any true sense of the word till they'd been signed and framed and sold and paid for. How much better that than this perpetual niggling!'

'I think Mr. Linnell paints beautifully,' Psyche cried all aglow, her heart beating hard in righteous indignation at the bare idea that anyone could venture thus coldly to criticise her divine painter at the very moment when he had just escaped from that deadly peril of his life in Africa. 'And as to niggling,' she went on, emboldened by love into something that dangerously approached art-criticism, 'it seemed to me, when I watched him at work, every touch he added to the pictures, and especially to papa's, brought them one degree nearer to truth and nature.'

Mrs. Mansel looked up with half-contemptuous surprise. This country-bred girl, who had never even seen an academy or a salon, far less the Vatican or the Pitti Palace—this village child give *her* lessons in æsthetics!

'You may niggle and niggle away as long as you like,' she answered coldly, 'but you can never get the thousands of leaves that quiver on an aspen, or the myriads of tiny lines and curves and shadows that go to make up one human face of ours. Not mechanical accuracy and embarrassed detail make the great artist: a judicious parsimony of touch and wealth of suggestion are what go to produce true pictures.'

Psyche gazed up at the portrait reverently—and was silent. In the matter of mere technique she felt herself

wholly unfit to pit her own criticism against Ida Mansel's; but as a faithful exposition of all that was best and greatest in Haviland Dumaresq's face and figure—the man himself, and the soul that was in him, not the mere outer body and husk and shell of him—she felt certain in her own heart Linnell's picture was a triumphant success and a veritable masterpiece. And all the world has since justified her. The philosophic depth, the logical clearness, the epigrammatic power, the proud reserve, the stoical heroism, the grand self-restraint and endurance of the man—all these were faithfully mirrored or delicately suggested in the endless lines of that admirable portrait: not a shade but spoke Haviland Dumaresq's character; not a tone of expression but helped to swell the general sense of a forceful and self-sufficing individuality. To look upon it one could almost see those proud lips part, and hear that calm and measured voice say in haughty self-consciousness, as once to Linnell: 'I must go through the world in my own orbit, come what may. I move on my circuit, undeterred and unswerving.'

Ida Mansel, indeed, with her Girton-bred precision and her cultivated narrowness! She to pretend to sit in judgment upon such a soul as Charles Linnell's! Could she see in either original or portrait those traits that Psyche admired the most? Could she understand the real granite greatness of Dumaresq's character, or the piercing insight with which Linnell had read it in his face, and impressed it in imperishable colours upon his canvas? Did she know what the highest side of art was aiming at, at all?

'The worst of this cut-and-dried modern higher education,' Psyche thought to herself, falling for the nonce into that hereditary trick of unconscious generalization, 'is that it educates women beyond their natural powers, and tries to raise them into planes of thought for which nature and descent have never equipped them beforehand.'

But what, in her happiness, did she care for such strictures? Her painter was safe, and she could afford to laugh at them.

'It's a very good portrait, though,' her father said,

taking up the cudgels half unconsciously for his daughter's lover. 'I don't pretend to understand its technical qualities myself, of course—art, I suppose, can only be adequately judged or understood by those who themselves have essayed and appraised its practical difficulties; but if I know how to read my own character (and I think I do, from an objective standpoint), Linnell, it seems to me, has managed to put it very cleverly on canvas. In considering a portrait——'

But even as he spoke he was interrupted by Reginald Mansel's sudden incursion, holding in one hand an evening paper, and all agog with ill-suppressed excitement at the strange and unexpected tidings contained in it. Psyche knew in a moment what their neighbour had come for. He had just learned the news of the relief of Khartoum!

'Seen to-night's *Pall Mall?*' he asked with emphasis, as he burst in with the eager face of a man who comes as the bearer of important information.

'No,' Dumaresq answered; 'but we've heard the news already, for all that. Mrs. Mansel and Psyche brought it from Melbury. I'm glad they've succeeded in getting there.'

Mansel stared back at him in mute surprise.

'Glad?' he exclaimed, bewildered. 'Glad? Glad of what? I know you're little interested in military affairs and push your horror of war to an extreme; but, hang it all, Dumaresq! you'll admit yourself this is going a little too far for anything. Glad that the Mahdi's got into Khartoum! Glad that our people have all had their throats cut by those rampant savages!'

Dumaresq clutched the paper with a thrill of astonishment.

'Had their throats cut?' he cried, gasping. 'And by those savages, too? Why, what do you mean, Mansel? They told me all was well at Khartoum.'

Mansel shook his head as he pointed with his finger to the latest telegrams.

'No, no,' he answered testily; 'that's all wrong, all unfounded. Here's the genuine news from the seat of war. Wilson's steamers have got up to Khartoum, only

to find the city taken, and Gordon and every Christian soul in the place massacred in cold blood by the Mahdi's people.'

For a minute or two Dumaresq, Mrs. Mansel, and her husband all gazed together at the fatal telegram. Absorbed in the news, they forgot all else. The philosopher wrung his hands in horror.

'Poor Linnell!' he cried, half under his breath. 'I acted for the best! I acted for the best! But I did wrong, perhaps, in dismissing him so abruptly.'

Mrs. Mansel turned round to look after her friend.

'Goodness gracious!' she exclaimed, with a little scream of horror, 'just look at Psyche!'

They turned and saw. The shock had unnerved her.

Psyche was sitting bolt upright in her chair. Her cheeks were pale and white as death. Her bloodless hands lay motionless on her knees. Her eyes were staring wide open in front of her. But she saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing, knew nothing. She was cold as if dead. Had the shock killed her?

That self-same evening, in Chancery Lane, at the office of Messrs. Burchell and Dobbs, family solicitors, the senior partner in that flourishing firm looked up from his perusal of the *St. James's Gazette*, and remarked reflectively:

'I say, Dobbs, that poor client of ours, C. A. Linnell—you remember—must have been one of the fellows murdered in this Khartoum massacre.'

Dobbs glanced aside from his *Echo*, and murmured in response:

'By Jove! so he must. He was out there, wasn't he? I'm sorry for him, poor fellow! A first-rate client! He must have been worth four hundred a year. And I say, Burchell, consols 'll go down to some tune on this news too, won't they?'

'Fallen already,' his partner answered, consulting his tape and pursing his lips up. 'Stock Exchange feels these pulses so instantaneously. Look here,' and he rang the electric bell at his side. 'Brooks, will you bring Mr. Linnell's box to me?'

The clerk brought it, and Mr. Burchell opened it deliberately, and glanced over the will.

'Aha!' he said, laying it down with some obvious unction. 'Precious lucky young woman, whoever she may be, Miss Psyche Dumaresq! Sounds like an actress: some casual love of his. Jolly glad she'd be this minute if only she knew the good luck in store for her. I thought I remembered it. Miss Psyche Dumaresq! Linnell's left her every blessed penny!'

'No!' Mr. Dobbs replied, screwing up his mouth, and laying down his *Echo*.

'Yes, every penny, to "Psyche, daughter of Haviland Dumaresq, Esquire, of Petherton!"'

'The family 'll dispute it!' Mr. Dobbs exclaimed, scenting prey upon the breeze and whetting his appetite.

'They can't!' his partner responded with cheerful certainty. 'There are none of them left. There's nobody to dispute with her. Sir Austen was the only relative Linnell had living; and Sir Austen was out at Khartoum along with him. Both of them had their throats cut at once, no doubt. Precious lucky young woman, Miss Psyche Dumaresq!'

And all the time Miss Psyche Dumaresq, unconscious of her luck, and most other circumstances, was sitting white as death in her chair at Petherton, with her open blue eyes staring blankly in front of her, and her dead, numb hands hanging down like a corpse's.

'Shall you write and inform her,' Mr. Dobbs asked, with his fat face screwed up, 'or wait for details and further confirmation? It's more business-like, of course, to wait for details; but promptitude often secures a new client. And eight thousand a year's not to be sneezed at.'

'No good,' Mr. Burchell responded, still scanning the will and shaking his head. 'I have Linnell's own express instructions not to write to her about it till a year's elapsed. Dumaresq—Dumaresq—let me see—Dumaresq. There's a fellow of the name writes sometimes, I think, in the *Westminster* or the *Fortnightly*. His daughter, no doubt: perhaps she jilted him. And a precious lucky thing for Miss Psyche Dumaresq.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

DESPAIR.

THEY carried Psyche up to her own room, and laid her on the bed, and tended her carefully.

'She's been affected like this more than once before,' Haviland Dumaresq said with a pang of remorse, trying to minimize the matter to his own conscience, 'though never quite so seriously, perhaps, as to-day. Poor child, poor child! It's strange how sensitive natures respond to a stimulus. She's been watching this campaign with such singular interest; and the suddenness of the shock, after such hopes aroused, shows how much she's been over-exciting herself all along about it.'

As for Ida Mansel, she held her peace and guessed the truth, for even Girton had not wholly extinguished her feminine instincts. They poured a little brandy down Psyche's throat to revive her, and gradually and slowly she came to herself again. She never once uttered Linnell's name, and nobody about her alluded to him in any way.

'Tell me what was in the paper!' she said, with the calm of despair; and they read it aloud to her—every word of it, ungarbled. She listened with her face buried deep in the pillow. 'Is that all?' she asked, as Ida Mansel ended. And her father answered in a choking voice:

'That's all, my darling.' After which she lay a long time silent.

At last she turned round, and with a terrible calmness looked up in their faces. Her eyes, though open, were singularly vacant.

'Why don't you light the candles?' she cried like a peevish child. 'It's so very dark. All dark, everywhere!' And she flung her hands about her with a curious impatience.

Haviland Dumaresq stood up in his horror. The candles were burning on Psyche's dressing-table, and the little white room was as bright as daylight. With an agonized face he looked down at his daughter.

'Don't you see me, Psyche?' he cried, all aghast. 'Look up at me, darling. Try hard. Don't you see me?'

Psyche groped out at him with extended arms.

'Where are you, papa?' she asked quite innocently.

Then she fell back in her place and burst at once into a flood of tears. She was glad she had that cloak to cover her sorrow with. Too proud to acknowledge the meaning of her grief, she could at least let it loose under false pretences. She could cry as much as she liked for Linnell now. They would think she was only crying for her own blindness.

That same evening a telegram went up to London, addressed to the greatest oculist of the day, begging him in terms of urgent entreaty to come down at once to a new patient at Petherton.

And Haviland Dumaresq had reason to bless the blindness too, in his own way, for it took him off for awhile from his remorseful conscience, and concentrated his thoughts upon Psyche's condition.

All the next day Psyche saw nothing; and the day after that, and the day after that again.

But the eminent oculist who had come down post-haste from town to see her, and who came down each evening again by the last train to watch the case—so profound was his admiration of the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy'—held out to them the happiest hopes for her recovery, after a short interval. It was a purely nervous affection, he said with confidence: functional, functional: no cataract, no disintegration, no structural disease: the merest passing failure of the optic centres. It was all in the brain, he assured them with great assurance many times over. They had every hope. There was nothing to despair about.

Every hope: no hope for Psyche! Nothing to despair about: while blank despair hedged her in and environed her! How little they know about hearts, these doctors!

At first she fancied there might yet be a chance. Not for her, of course: that was nothing—but for her painter. All was so vague and uncertain at Khartoum. Youth is loath indeed to give up all for lost. So young a love, so

soon crushed out; impossible! impossible! And even the papers, the London papers, those wise, sagacious, omniscient papers, held out doubts at first as to Gordon's death. Well, then, if as to Gordon's, why not also as to Linnell's just equally? She could not believe he was dead, with that day unexplained. She could not think an explanation would never come. She hoped on against hope, till all hope was impossible.

Slowly and surely her faith gave way, however. Each fresh day's telegrams brought fresh grounds for doubting that any living soul had escaped the massacre. Deserters brought in news of the two or three Europeans still held in horrible slavery in Khartoum; and Linnell's name was not among them. Day by day, the terrible certainty grew clearer and ever more clear to Psyche that her lover lay dead in the heart of Africa.

And yet, strange to say, the specialist was right. Psyche's blindness was only temporary. Hour after hour, as hope gradually sank and died out within her, her eyesight was slowly but surely restored to her. In three or four weeks she was as well as ever—to all outer view—as Ida Mansel observed her. But her heart—her heart was crushed within her.

Weeks rolled on, and months passed by, and the fate of all who had fought at Khartoum grew from time to time more fixed and certain. Spring returned, and with it Geraldine Maitland. For that congenial companionship Psyche was glad, as far as she could be glad for anything now; for Geraldine was the only living soul with whom she could talk—not freely, but at all—about her lost painter. To her father, she never even mentioned his name; the subject was a sealed book between them. It was too awful a shadow to recognise in speech. There are ghosts one can only pretend to avoid by strenuously ignoring them in the bosom of the family. Haviland Dumaresq knew in his own soul he had sent Linnell away to his grave; but he had done it for the best; he had done it for the best. No man is responsible for the unseen and unexpected contingencies of his actions. We must be judged by our intentions, not by results. How could he know the young fellow would run away with the

precipitancy of youth into danger's mouth? All he wanted was to protect Psyche. His sole object in life, now, was his daughter's happiness.

His daughter's happiness! Oh, futile old philosopher! If only men and women would just be content to let each of us live his own life, undisturbed, and not scheme and plan and contrive so much for the happiness of others, how very much happier we should all be for it!

Haviland Dumaresq had meant to take Psyche up to London for the season that coming spring, and introduce her to those powerful friends of his—for he had friends, not a few, in virtue of his apostolate—by whose aid she was to make that brilliant marriage which he still wildly dreamed for her in his opium ecstasies. He had even, by superhuman efforts, provided beforehand the needful money for going into lodgings, good fashionable lodgings, for some months in town, where he might launch his Psyche upon the great world of London; and Ida Mansel, most practical of heads, had promised to find an eligible tenant meanwhile for the Wren's Nest, at the usual rate of furnished houses at the sea-side in early summer. But when May came round—that smileless May—poor Psyche's heart was still so sore that Haviland Dumaresq shrank himself from putting his own plan into execution. It would only spoil her chances in the end to bring her out while this mood was upon her. After all, he thought, there was plenty of time yet. His rosebud was still so young and fresh: no need to hurry. Let her get over this girlish fancy first about a blighted heart—girls are so plastic; and then, when she'd forgotten her supposed romance — young people take a hysterical delight in imagining themselves unhappy—he could fulfil his plan of taking her up to town, and give her a fairer chance in the matrimonial lottery with the gilded youth of our teeming London.

For at Petherton Haviland Dumaresq was a very small person; but in London, he knew, more than one rich man's son would be proud to marry Haviland Dumaresq's daughter. In that mighty mart, where everything finds its level so soon, even true greatness is more justly and generously appraised than elsewhere. The provincial

celebrity sinks at once to his proper place: but then, *en revanche*, the truly great man who ranks in his shire but as a third-rate personage finds himself in London duly estimated at his right worth by a more critical audience.

So the spring and summer passed slowly away; and autumn came again, and with it the anniversary of Linnell's departure.

All through the summer, Psyche's eyes had troubled her again from time to time; but she thought very little about her eyes now: of what use to her were they? The only thing on earth she cared to see was gone for ever. They would never help her to see her painter again. For despair itself becomes at last a sort of sacred cult, a mysterious pleasure.

Still, in a certain vague, indefinite way, without herself attaching much importance to the subject, Psyche dimly noticed a change in the character of the disease. Though she saw very well for most of her time, she observed that the periods of dimness were much more frequent now than of old, and the periods of total loss of vision, when they came, remained far longer, and were altogether more persistent in every way, than in the early stages. She recognised to herself, with a strange uncomplaining Dumaresquian acquiescence, a fatalistic acceptance of the order of the cosmos, that she was slowly going blind, for no particular reason, but merely because the will to see was failing her.

She concealed it as far as she could, of course, from her father. She couldn't bear to vex the old philosopher's soul, to pile on that pathetic, unsuccessful life one more great failure. He loved her so dearly and was so proud and fond of her. To be sure, it was only putting off the evil day. But Psyche put it off with all her might, for all that. Papa was old and far from strong. Psyche knew in her heart he couldn't live many years longer. Why vex his last days needlessly with this final burden? Was it not enough, and more than enough, that that great soul should find itself in old age poor and broken and weighed down with sorrow, without adding that last straw to complete the disaster? The pathos of Haviland Dumaresq's nobly wasted life sufficed as it stood: Psyche

at least would do her best to conceal from him whatever might add to his misery.

So she strove hard to hide from him her growing blindness. If the dim fit seized her as she sat and read, she would lay down her book and remain sitting and talking without showing it in any way till her eyes began slowly to resume their function. If it came upon her when she was out walking on the Downs with her father, instead of going on and groping her way, which would have betrayed her case, she would pause and pretend to be scanning the landscape, or would sit down on the turf and pull grasses by her side, while her father looked on and never suspected the reason for her wayward conduct. Now and then, to be sure, circumstances arose where it was impossible wholly to conceal the facts. She might be reading the paper aloud to her father, and be compelled by that sudden mistiness of the words to break off all at once in the middle of a sentence: or she might be walking down the quiet main street of Petherton, and find the visible world in one moment of time transformed into a vast blank of darkness before her. But even so, she noticed one curious fact. These blind fits overcame her least often in her father's presence; and by a violent effort of will, when he was by, she seemed able actually to command her eyesight. The strong stimulus of a vivid desire to save him needless pain conquered the weakness and feebleness of nerve which alone made the solid earth thus fade into nothingness before her eyes at a moment's notice.

Nay, in her father's presence Psyche even pretended not to feel sad: she tried hard to bury her grief from his eyes: for his sake she would still appear to be young and joyous. Though her heart ached, she would still play lawn-tennis on the Maitlands' court, and still talk nonsense, hateful, light-tongued nonsense, with the mild-eyed young curate. She was her father's daughter, and could she not talk in her father's way? Had she not inherited his iron nature? Her heart might break, indeed, but no daw should peck at it. She kept her sacred sorrow locked up securely in her silent breast. And there it succeeded in eating her life out.

With Geraldine Maitland, however, she was less careful of concealment; at least, as regarded her fits of blindness. The two girls walked and talked on the Downs much together; and it often happened that in the midst of their conversation Psyche's feet and tongue would falter unawares, and she would put out her hands to grope her way before her through the thick darkness that all at once enveloped her steps. As the summer wore on—so Geraldine noticed—these sudden failures grew more and more common. On one such occasion, indeed, when they were strolling along the face of the east cliff, near the tumbling sea, the world became a sudden blank to Psyche, and she sat down despairingly on the short smooth grass, with her sightless eyes turned toward the waves and the warm sun of summer.

'What's the matter, dearest?' Geraldine Maitland asked in her sympathetic way, for Geraldine when she wished could be very womanly.

'It's all gone again,' Psyche answered with a sigh. 'Oh, Geraldine, it all goes so often now! I don't feel as if I'd strength to fight against it, even for papa's sake, any longer.'

Geraldine's face was very grave.

'What does your father say about it, Psyche?' she asked seriously. 'He ought, surely, to take you up to town to a doctor.'

'Oh no; not that!' Psyche cried, shrinking back with infinite horror. 'I don't want doctors to go cross-questioning me and torturing me any more. I can bear it all, if I'm only left alone; but I can't bear being worried and cross-examined and bothered by dreadful men about it.'

'But what does your father think?' Geraldine persisted still. 'I'm sure he ought to do something to set it right again.'

'He doesn't know—or he hardly knows at all,' Psyche answered quickly. 'I've kept it from him as much as I can. I don't want to cause him any needless trouble.'

Geraldine held her peace and answered nothing. But in her own mind she had decided at once what was the proper thing for her to do. She would tell Haviland

Dumaresq that very day how Psyche fared, and would urge him to take some competent medical opinion.

That evening Psyche took tea at the Maitlands'. She noticed the General, always bland and polite, was even blander and politer than usual in his demeanour towards her. His courtesy had in it a touch of that tender and chivalrous gentleness which old soldiers, more perhaps than any other men, know how to display on occasion to a woman in distress. Even Mrs. Maitland, as a rule so painfully cold and distant, unbent a little that day to the motherless girl. She called her 'my dear' more than once, and it was not the 'my dear' of conventional politeness with which women hold one another off far more effectually than with the coldest courtesies: it was the 'my dear' of genuine feminine interest. After tea, too, Psyche observed that Geraldine slipped away for a quarter of an hour on some vague excuse, though she didn't attach much importance at the time to her sudden departure. When Geraldine returned, her eyes seemed somewhat red from crying, and she gave no explanation of where she had been, further than to say with an evasive smile that she had run out for a bit on a little private errand.

At seven o'clock Psyche returned to the Wren's Nest. She opened the door with a noiseless hand, and walked unexpectedly into the little drawing-room. For a moment the haze gathered over her eyes: as it cleared away she saw, to her surprise, her father, that strong man, sitting bowed and bent with sorrow in his easy-chair, his hands clasped hard between his open knees in front of him. Tears were trickling slowly down his bronzed cheek; his attitude was eloquent of utter despondency. On the table by his side stood a little glass bottle—quite empty. Psyche, in her sudden speechless terror, remembered to have seen it on the mantel-shelf that morning, full of those little silver-coated pellets which she somehow associated in her own mind—though she couldn't say why—with her father's frequent and distracting headaches.

'Why, father dear,' she cried, flinging one arm round

his neck in an access of sudden energetic sympathy, 'what on earth does this mean? What's the matter with you, darling? And why—is the bottle—on the table—empty?'

Her father looked up at her and nodded his head slowly and despondently.

'It's lost its effect,' he answered in a very hollow voice. 'It's lost its effect altogether, I'm afraid. One after another, I've taken them in turn, and found no relief from this tremor of my nerves. I never took so many in my life before. I was frightened, myself, when I wanted another and found I'd taken the whole bottleful. They do me no good; they do me no good now. What can I turn to, to relieve me from this misery?'

'Father!' Psyche cried, with a sudden burst of horrible intuition, 'it isn't opium? Oh, for heaven's sake, tell me, it isn't opium!'

The old man drew her down to him in a wild spasm of remorse and affection.

'My darling,' he cried in the fervour of his regret, 'don't ask me its name! don't put any name to it! Forget it, forget it: I never meant you should know. But whatever it was, Psyche, from this day forth, for your sake, my child, I solemnly promise you, I have done with it for ever!'

There was a moment's pause. Then Psyche said again:

'Was it that that was troubling you when I came in, papa?'

Haviland Dumaresq looked back into her deep-blue eyes with those truthful eyes of his. He was too organically moral to mince a lie with her.

'No,' he answered shortly, though with a terrible wrench. 'It was *not*, Psyche.'

Again there was a pause. Then Psyche whispered very low once more:

'Has Geraldine Maitland been here this evening?'

Haviland Dumaresq groaned, but he answered without one moment's hesitation:

'Yes, Psyche.'

Psyche drew over a chair from the wall and seated

herself beside him. She held her father's hand in her own, tenderly. For three minutes those two who loved one another so strangely sat there in silence. At last Psyche looked up and said in a very low voice:

'Well, papa?'

Dumaresq put one hand to his forehead and sighed.

'To-morrow, Psyche,' he said, in a dreamy way, 'we go up to London. I want to take medical advice about myself—and I shall seize the opportunity at the same time of asking Godichau's opinion about your eyesight.'

Psyche dropped his hand resignedly.

'As you will, papa,' she said in a very soft whisper. 'But I never wanted to trouble you, myself, about so small a matter.'

And all that night she lay awake and cried—cried in her silent, tearless fashion.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MEDICAL OPINION.

THE great London doctor to whom Haviland Dumaresq submitted his case in due form next day shook his head gravely when the famous thinker detailed his symptoms to him with some very small mental reservations. For we none of us tell the whole truth to doctors. Even a philosopher can hardly be trusted to make a clean breast of it to his medical adviser; and Dumaresq, though he admitted in part the opium, glided gently and gracefully over that painful part of the subject. But Sir Anthony Wraxall (for it was no less a man than that celebrated physician) didn't need to be told to what extent his patient had persevered in the baneful practice. 'Even you, Mr. Dumaresq,' he said with a smile, 'who know so well how to regulate the lives of all the rest of us, can't be trusted at a pinch to regulate your own! Why, I quote you every day to my lady patients as the great authority on these questions of nerve; yet your own nerves have gone to pieces bodily. "Physician, heal thyself," is a very old cry. I feel its sting myself.

Well, well, we must see what we can manage to do for you.'

'Not much,' Haviland Dumaresq answered gloomily.

Sir Anthony gazed hard at him from those keen small eyes of his—eyes like a ferret's, overhung with the heavy black, beetling eyebrows—eyes that seemed to peer through you outright into the profoundest depths and recesses of your being.

'You're right,' he answered. 'Quite true, Mr. Dumaresq. With you I may drop professional reserve. No use in prophesying smooth things to the thinker who worked out the scheme of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy." I won't pretend to give you the little prescription which in rather less than no time will make another man of you. You're very well aware that broken-down machines can't be restored by pouring a few drops of oil on their bearings. You're one of us in all essentials, and you know far more about your own case, no doubt, than all the rest of us put together. I can only aid you by my diagnosis. And I'm afraid I can tell you very little in that respect that's likely to please you.'

Haviland Dumaresq's lip trembled. It was curious to him to note, however, even in this moment of deep despondency, how much more everybody thought of himself and his work in proportion as they approached nearer to his own high level. A country doctor would have treated him at best (if indeed he knew the cosmical philosopher's name at all) as a mere dabbler with some superficial knowledge of animal physiology: Sir Anthony Wraxall, the greatest London consultant of his day, treated him at least with the deepest respect as a high collateral authority on his own subject. Dumaresq smiled a grim smile of satisfied appreciation. Recognition is dear to the very greatest of men. 'I thought as much,' he answered, in his calm impassive way. 'I felt, myself, things couldn't go on like this much longer. The machine's worn out, you say. Then you don't hold out much hope for my life? The mechanism can't work at such low pressure for any time worth speaking of without stopping altogether.'

Sir Anthony Wraxall shook his head ominously.

'Not for three months certainly,' he said, 'if you still continue to ply it with opium.'

'But I've left off opium,' Dumaresq answered with perfect confidence.

'Since when?' Sir Anthony asked, peering deeply once more into his patient's widely dilated pupils, which still bore evidence of a recent overdose.

'Since yesterday,' Dumaresq replied in his coldest tone and with consummate gravity.

If any other man had said such a thing to him, Sir Anthony Wraxall would have laughed outright, and been amply justified in so laughing. But the voice in which Dumaresq uttered those simple words, with all the earnestness of his stoical nature, meant a great deal; and Sir Anthony understood it.

'I see,' the great consultant answered with a very grave face. 'You have promised, no doubt?'

And Dumaresq, nodding his gray head solemnly, made answer with infinite weight:

'I have promised.'

'In that case,' Sir Anthony said more cheerfully, taking it for granted at once from the man's mere look that the resolve was enough, and that Dumaresq would do exactly as he intended, 'I think I can guarantee you, with moderate care and a change of climate, from eighteen months' to three years' respite.'

Dumaresq's face was statuesque in its repose; he never changed colour or moved a muscle. If sentence of death had been pronounced for that day, he would never have betrayed it in his facial expression. But his heart was very sore for poor Psyche, for all that. If he must die so soon—and leave Psyche unmarried—he would feel he had indeed thrown his life away for nothing. But still, three years is a very long time. Much may be done, with energy, in three years! Psyche had still the world to choose from. How many men would be pleased and proud to wed Haviland Dumaresq's daughter—his guileless Psyche!

'What climate?' he asked with Spartan brevity, sparing his emotions to economize the great doctor's rigid quarter-hour.

Sir Anthony rubbed his hands together reflectively, as if grinding out wisdom from his palms between them.

'What you want,' he said with oracular calm, 'is rest, change, variety, an open-air life, sun, sea, and freedom. "The palms and temples of the South," you know, and all that sort of thing; you languish for the purple seas, as our *other* great man has somewhere phrased it. The Riviera's not exactly the place for you—overdone, overdone; too much noise and bustle and vulgarity. What *you* want, with your highly-strung nervous temperament, and your wide delight in natural contemplation, is Egypt or Algiers; quiet, solitude, novelty. The Oriental world will perhaps be new to you—though you seem to have exhausted universal nature.'

'I have never been in the East in my life,' Dumaresq answered gloomily; for how he was to raise the money to go, without trenching on his tiny reserve for Psyche, he hadn't at that moment the remotest notion.

Sir Anthony's face brightened up.

'That's well,' he said, with professional cheeriness. Your great doctor makes a point of putting the best face on everything. 'The newer the scene, the more likely to suit you. Novelty and stir of Oriental life—camels and Arabs and sands and date-palms—pyramids and temples and sphinxes and Memnons—the bustle of the bazaars, the calm of the desert—that's the kind of thing to rouse and stimulate you. Hire a dahabeeah and go up the Nile; or rent a villa at Mustapha Supérieur. Don't work, don't think, don't write, don't philosophize. Let that teeming brain of yours lie fallow for awhile. Ride, drive, play whist, talk gossip, drink tea, skim the *Saturday Review*, or the last new novel—I can recommend Ouida—and don't bother yourself in any way about anything or anybody. A good French cook, generous diet, sound champagne, and a comfortable carriage, will give the machine a new lease of life for an extra twelve months or two years at any rate. You've been living too sparingly of late, I feel sure. Pulse is low and circulation feeble. Change all that; make yourself comfortable wherever you go, and treat yourself to every luxury you've a mind to.'

He snapped his mouth to and looked very wise. 'Tis a professional way of announcing to your patient in polite pantomime that (with a little formality of cash transfer) this interview may now terminate.

As for poor Haviland Dumaresq, in his Spartan poverty, he fingered in his pocket those hard-earned guineas he was to pay so soon for this sapient advice, and wondered to himself where Sir Anthony thought the money was to come from for the dahabeeah and the villa and the comfortable carriage, the champagne and the cook and the generous diet. Did he really believe the 'Encyclopædic Philosophy' was a modern Golconda, or was it a part of his stereotyped professional humbug to treat every patient as a potential Midas? Dumaresq and Psyche had come up to town that morning by third-class from Petherton; and by third-class they would go down again to their home to-morrow. A dahabeeah was to them as practically unattainable as a royal yacht; a villa at Algiers as far beyond their means as Windsor Castle or the Winter Palace.

Sir Anthony glanced at him once more with inquiring eyes as he stood there doubtful. 'But mind, no opium!' he added sharply, in a sudden afterthought.

The old stoic stared back at him with profound majesty.

'I have spoken,' he said, and made no further answer.

Sir Anthony saw his mistake at once, and with practised tact bowed a hasty apology.

Dumaresq laid down the guineas on the table, and went out again to Psyche in the bare little ante-room, with his heart very sad and his spirits sinking. He knew, of course, it couldn't possibly be Egypt; but somehow or other he must manage Algiers. He had only three years left to settle Psyche in! That one thought alone monopolized his soul. No time to waste upon foolish flirtations with penniless painters now! He must find some rich man to make his darling happy.

'What did he recommend, papa?' Psyche asked, all tremulous, as they went sadly down the steps together.

'Ten thousand a year and a brand-new constitution,'

her father answered, with an unwonted touch of cynical bitterness. 'These great doctors are all alike, Psyche. They could cure us at once, if only we'd be millionaires of twenty-five to please them.' And in deference to his medical attendant's advice he hailed a hansom—an unheard-of luxury—and drove off at once to the famous oculist's.

The famous oculist, in his turn, after examining Psyche's eyes from every possible point of view, dismissed the poor girl herself to the waiting-room, and held back her father with a courteous wave for a moment's consultation.

'Mr. Dumaresq,' he said in a very respectful tone, 'of course you know as well as I myself do what's the matter with this poor young lady. It isn't her eyes themselves, properly speaking; they are not at fault at all. It's mere functional disuse of the optic centres. The retina and lenses are as right as ninepence. All she needs is to rouse herself—to rouse herself. Internal causes—I call it that. With an effort of will, she could see as well as ever she saw in her life again, I assure you.'

'So I thought,' Haviland Dumaresq answered, still unmoved, but trembling inwardly in every nerve. 'As this is professional, I won't hesitate to mention to you, in strict confidence, that my daughter's affections have been very severely strained of late.'

'I guessed as much,' Dr. Godichau replied, letting his *pince-nez* drop with a sudden movement from his eyes gracefully. 'Well, we all know the two best prescriptions medical science can propose for that. First, change of air; next, change of affections. A new scene, in fact—and a new lover.'

Haviland Dumaresq drew himself up stiffly. He approved the advice, but not the expression.

'I propose to take my daughter abroad,' he answered somewhat curtly, with his grand air. 'I wish to give her change of scene and fresh ideas. I shall take her out into unaccustomed society, where she may have opportunities of forgetting her unfortunate fancies, whatever they may have been, and of forming perhaps new friends and new attachments.'

'One nail knocks out another,' Dr. Godichau answered with French sententiousness.

Haviland Dumaresq wondered in his own soul why all oculists have invariably a distinct want of sensitiveness. Could it be, he asked himself, because they have so often to operate painfully on the eye, and the eye is the most delicate of human organs?

'Well, I'll try to throw her into fresh surroundings,' he went on coldly, unheeding the specialist's ill-timed remark. 'Sir Anthony Wraxall, whom I have just been consulting on my own account, advises me to spend the winter in Algiers. Would Algiers, do you think, suit my daughter?'

'The very thing!' Dr. Godichau exclaimed with the common medical air of profound conviction. 'What the young lady wants is rousing—taking out of herself: engaging in the concerns of humanity generally. If once you can persuade her to use her eyes—to look about her and feel an interest in things—it'll be all right. Her sight 'll come back again. Nothing's more likely to have that result than a totally new Oriental society. At Algiers she'll be compelled, against her will almost, to look at the Arabs and the mosques and the fresh forms of life that unfold themselves like a panorama before her. The young lady's never been out of Europe, perhaps? No; I thought not. Then nothing could be so good. I was going to advise a trip to Italy or Spain; but Africa's better, Africa's better! Take her there, by all means. And if you can find a new nail to knock out the other, so much the luckier, of course—so much the luckier.'

Haviland Dumaresq went back to his shabby little hotel in the Strand that day fully determined in his own mind upon two things: to go to Algiers, though the trip should cost him the savings of a lifetime; and to find that rich husband for Psyche within the next eighteen months, before he himself should be finally incapacitated for providing for her future.

And all this time the senior partner in the firm of Burchell and Dobbs, family solicitors, was going about London chuckling silently to himself at the untold

wealth already potentially possessed, under the will of the late C. A. Linnell, deceased, by that lucky young woman, Miss Psyche Dumaresq.

But as for Psyche herself, she felt almost happy when her father told her they were to go to Algiers, for then she wouldn't be separated for the winter from Geraldine; and Geraldine was now her only confidential and sympathetic friend in her great sorrow.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

QUESTIONS OF INHERITANCE.

About the same time, Reginald Mansel, Esquire, of Petherton Episcopi, happening to be up in town on private business, had occasion to call on his father's old friend, that distinguished sailor, Admiral John Antony Rolt, of the Senior United Service.

'So the heiress lives down your way?' Admiral Rolt observed, puckering up his small eyes at the end of some desultory conversation—and always eager, after his kind, to improve every possible source of information. 'Miss Psyche Dumaresq, I mean; precious odd name, Psyche; rather pride myself, as an old salt, on knowing how to pronounce it. There was a *Psyche* in the Navy List once, I remember, a wooden gunboat, on the Pacific station, when I commanded the *Skylark;* though *she* went to pieces at last in the China seas—poor M'Nab sank down to Davy Jones's locker in her—and was never put together again. Smart craft, very; and *this* Miss Psyche's a tidy young lady, too, I'm told; taut, neat, and clipper-rigged. Well, she comes into all Charlie Linnell's money.'

'Impossible!' Mansel answered with promptitude. 'I've never heard a word of it. She's a great friend of my wife's, and a very nice girl in her way, no doubt; and Linnell fell in love with her: but she wouldn't accept him. He's left her nothing. If he had, I'm sure we'd have been the first to hear of it.'

'Well, it's a very odd case,' the Admiral continued,

pursing up his little pig's eyes even smaller than before —'a very odd case as ever I heard of. She isn't to know of it for another year, but I'm sure I'm right. I've been talking it over to-day with Linnell's half-brother Frank — the parson in Northumberland; and Frank doesn't quite see his way out of it. Precious awkward for the parson, there's no denying it.'

Reginald Mansel started.

'Why, I thought the half-brother was dead!' he exclaimed in surprise. 'Killed in a railway accident. My wife certainly told me so.'

'Ah, that's just where it is,' the Admiral answered, rubbing his fat hands with profound gusto. 'As fine a muddle as ever you saw in your life. A perfect godsend for the Court of Chancery. Killed sure enough: so he was—in the newspapers: smashed to atoms in the Doncaster collision, they reported at first. You remember the accident—pig-iron and so forth. But, you see, when they pick out a lot of bodies, pell-mell, from a jolly good smash, and stack 'em along in the hospital, they're not so very particular, just at the first beginning, whether any one fellow among 'em happens to be still breathing, or whether he doesn't. So they telegraphed up to London post haste, in the list of killed, "Reverend Francis Austen Linnell, Vicar of Thingumbob-cum-Whatyoumaycallit, Northumberland." Correspondents are in such a precious hurry nowadays to supply the very latest news to their particular print, that you can't expect them to hang dawdling about in a ward, on the watch till the breath's well out of a man's body.' And the Admiral chuckled low to himself musically.

'Then you mean to say the fellow isn't dead, after all?' Mansel exclaimed, astonished. 'It was a mistaken rumour!'

'Dead! my dear sir; why, I tell you, he was lunching with me at the Pothouse—you know the Pothouse? my other club: not its official name—only this very morning. And a prettier muddle than those papers made of it you never heard. It was three whole days before they plucked up courage to announce their little error, and state that the Reverend Frank was not quite gone, only

seriously wounded. Meanwhile, Sir Austen and the painter man went off in a hurry to Khartoum without seeing the correction, and to the day of their death never heard at all that the parson had turned up well and alive again. It was really most unfortunate. Frank Linnell believes those papers have done him out of all the Linnell money—Sir Austen's and the other man's. Only, you see, he doesn't quite know how he can go to work to get it all back again. It's a ticklish job, I admit; but I wouldn't give much, all the same—with a parson against her—for Miss Psyche Dumaresq's chances of the property.'

'Surely, though, if Linnell left his money by will to Miss Dumaresq, she'd get it, in any case,' Mansel objected incredulously.

The Admiral stared hard at him, and smiled a knowing smile.

'You don't understand the glorious uncertainty of the law,' he answered, enchanted. Then, with all the intense enjoyment of the male old woman, he proceeded to detail to his country acquaintance the whole long story of the Linnell family, and their various complications—*Bellerophon*, *Cockatrice*, Sally Withers, the Dean's daughter, and the rest of it—exactly as it all envisaged itself in full to his own lively and by no means too scrupulous imagination. Mansel listened with profound attention; but when the Admiral had finished he ventured to put in cautiously:

'Still, I don't quite understand how all this can interfere with Psyche's inheritance of Charles Linnell's money—if, as you say, he's really left it to her.'

'Why, here's the point, don't you see,' the Admiral answered cheerily, buttonholing his listener and enforcing his argument with one fat uplifted forefinger. 'Charles Linnell, as I understand, came up to town from your place, Petherton, on the very day after his half-brother Frank was declared dead in the morning papers. So far, so good. But that same night, as I learn from one of the witnesses to the deed, he made his will, and Sir Austen signed it—said will leaving everything he died possessed of to the young lady, unknown, of the name of Psyche. Now, Frank Linnell's contention is that Sir

Austen and Charles arrived at an understanding, *under* the impression,' and the Admiral brought down his fat forefinger on his knee, to enforce his point—'*under* the impression that he, Frank, was dead and done for; which of course, in actual fact, he wasn't. Therefore, he argues, the will is accordingly null and void, and he himself ought to come into the money.'

'But how can he,' Mansel inquired, smiling, 'if he's really illegitimate? By law, if I'm rightly informed, he and Charles Linnell are not considered to be even related.'

The Admiral shrugged his shoulders and pursed his mouth firmly.

'Well, I haven't quite mastered all the ins and outs of it,' he answered with candour. 'It's a trifle confused for an old salt like me; but I believe the learned counsel who understand the law get at it something like this, d'ye see. It all depends upon which of the two, Sir Austen or Charles Linnell, was killed first at Khartoum. If Charles was killed first, then the Reverend Frank asserts—you understand—this will being null and void, owing to unsound mind, errors of fact, want of proper disposing intent, and other causes—that Sir Austen, as next-of-kin and sole heir-at-law, inherited the pill-money. For that, he relies upon Charles Linnell's legitimacy. But on the other hand, Charles Linnell being now well out of the way, and unable to prove or disprove anything, the Reverend Frank also goes in, as an alternative, for claiming that he's actually legitimate himself, and denying proof of Miss Sally Violet's marriage. On that point, there's nobody now who can bring up good evidence. So he stands to win either way. If he's legitimate himself, he's a baronet anyhow, and he comes into the reversion of Thorpe Manor. If he's not legitimate, he's no baronet, to be sure, and the entail fails; but the fun of it is, he gets Sir Austen's personal estate, for all that, through his mother, the Dean's daughter, who was Sir Austen's second cousin, twice removed, or something of the sort, and whose case is covered by Sir Austen's settlements. The old father did that—the Peninsular man, you know

—after the bigamy came out. He insisted upon putting in Frank Linnell by name in the settlements, as heir to the personalty, irrespective of the question of his birth altogether. And in the personalty, the Reverend Frank now asserts, he reckons in Charles Linnell's pill-money.'

Mansel drew his hand across his brow confusedly.

'It *is* a trifle mixed,' he answered with a puzzled air. 'But it's decidedly clever. I should think it ought to prove a perfect mine of wealth to the Inner Temple.'

'Mine of wealth!' the Admiral echoed with a snort of delight. 'I believe you, my boy. Golconda or Kimberley isn't in it by comparison. The whole estate won't cover the law charges. For, you see, there's the lovely question to decide beforehand, *did* Sir Austen or his cousin die first? And till that's settled, nothing fixed can be done about the property. Well, Frank Linnell doesn't mean to let the question drop. He has a twelvemonth to spare, during which time he's going to work like a nigger to prevent the lady with the classical name from coming into the property. Of course you won't mention a word of this to her? I tell it you in confidence. That's all right. Thank you. So Frank thinks of going to Egypt and up the Nile this very next winter as ever is, to see if he can collect any evidence anywhere as to which was killed first—his half-brother Charles, or his cousin Sir Austen. And between you and me, sir—if only you knew these Egyptian fellows as well as I do—the Reverend Frank must be a much more simple-minded person than I take him to be if he doesn't get at least half a dozen green-turbaned, one-eyed sheikhs to swear by the beard of the Prophet, till all's blue, that they saw Charles Linnell with their own eyes lying dead at Khartoum, in any position that seems most convenient, while Sir Austen sat in a respectful attitude, shedding a decorous tear or two above his mangled body. An Egyptian, sir,' the Admiral continued, blinking his small eyes even more vigorously than was his wont—'an Egyptian would swear away his own father's life, bless your soul! for a tin piastre.'

'Then you think whatever evidence is wanted will be duly forthcoming?' Mansel asked dubiously.

'Think? I don't think. I know it, unless the Reverend Frank's a born fool. But even after he's got it, don't you see, there's a lot more still left to prove. Yet even so, he stands to play a winning card either way. If he's legitimate, he's a baronet of Thorpe Manor; and if he isn't, he's heir all the same to Sir Austen's personalty.' And the Admiral chuckled.

Mansel looked at him with a curious air of suspended judgment.

'After all,' he said slowly, in his critical way, 'you're taking a great deal for granted, aren't you? How on earth do we know, when one comes to think of it, that either of the Linnells is really dead at all? How on earth do we know they aren't still cooped up in Khartoum, as O'Donovan was in Merv, you recollect, and that they mayn't turn up unexpectedly some day to defeat all these hasty surmises and guesses? You can't prove a man's will till you've first proved he's dead; and who's to say that either of the Linnells is dead, when one comes to face it?'

The Admiral threw back his head and laughed internally.

'Dead!' he answered, much amused. 'Of course they're dead. As dead as mutton! As dead as a doornail! As dead as Julius Cæsar! Do you think the Mahdi's people, when once they got in, would leave a Christian soul alive in Khartoum? My dear fellow, you don't know these Egyptians and Soudanese as well as I do—I was out for a year on the Red Sea station. They'd cut every blessed throat in the whole garrison! There's not a Christian soul alive to-day in Khartoum!'

CHAPTER XXIX.

FRESH ACQUAINTANCES.

It was with a feeling very nearly akin to relief that Psyche found herself, some six weeks later, in a pretty little bedroom in a Moorish villa on the sun-smitten hills of Mustapha Supérieur.

'Why, I know the very place for you,' Geraldine Maitland exclaimed with delight, when Psyche informed her on her return to Petherton that medical authority, two deep, had prescribed Algiers for their joint indispositions. 'A dear little *pension* on the Mustapha slope. It's as clean as a pin, and just like a home, and it's kept by an English officer's widow, a Mrs. Holliday. It's not so very dear, either,' she hastened to add, seeing Psyche's face growing faintly incredulous. 'They'd take in friends of ours at special rates. Mamma has sent them such lots of boarders.'

And indeed the rates, as quoted to Haviland Dumaresq some days later, in Mrs. Holliday's letter, were very special—very special indeed; for a reason which Geraldine Maitland knew best, and which she took care to keep to herself very strictly. 'I should feel *greatly* obliged, however,' Mrs. Holliday wrote, underlining the *greatly* with two feminine bars, 'if you would have the kindness to refrain from mentioning these terms I quote to any other of the visitors at the villa, as they are considerably below usual charges, to meet the wishes of my friend Mrs. Maitland.'

Oh, the journey south! The rest and change of it! The delight of getting away from the Wren's Nest, with its endless obtrusive memories of Linnell! The calm of travel — the momentary oblivion! Paris, Dijon, the Rhone, Marseilles! For twenty-four hours Psyche almost forgot herself.

The dear little *pension* on the Mustapha slope, too, how thoroughly it deserved Geraldine Maitland's judicious commendation! It was very pretty and very home-like. After thirty hours' tossing on the faithless Mediterranean —bluest but most treacherous of all known seas—and that long drive up the dusty road through the vivid town from the quays at Algiers, Psyche was right glad to rest herself at last in that dainty little bedroom at the Villa des Orangers, and to look out of the arcaded Moorish window at the palms and aloes that diversified the garden.

True enough, as Dr. Godichau had confidently predicted, her eyesight came back to her for the nonce at a bound,

Wisdom was justified of all her children. Psyche had seen everything all the way up through those crowded streets; she saw everything still with perfect distinctness in the arcades and gardens of that quaint old *pension*.

It was an antique Moorish country-house, all white-washed walls and horseshoe arches, planted on the side of a tiny ravine, near the very summit of an Algerian hill, some six hundred feet above a deep-blue bay of that treacherous and all too beautiful Mediterranean. Through the jealously-barred and grated windows of a deep-set chamber in what was once the harem of the old Turkish proprietor, Psyche's eye just caught faint glimpses westward of a feathery date-palm, a jungle of loquat trees and a ruddy hillside of basking sandstone, red as the familiar South Hams of Devonshire. Beyond the ravine displayed in further perspective a tangled cane-brake, a steep road down whose tortuous slope an old Arab countryman was defiling slowly, cross-legged, on his pannier-laden donkey, and a picturesque wine factory, whose snow-white archways and low stories were all gracefully pinked out along their constructive lines with decorative string courses of Oriental tile-work. A peep of the dim blue Atlas to eastward across a misty plain completed the view from the windows of that quaintly-pretty room—a view which hardly needed the domed and arcaded mansion on the hilltop behind, or the veiled forms of the Moorish women gliding noiselessly down the pathway opposite, to assure Psyche that this was indeed in very truth that wonderful Africa.

Without and within, to say the truth, to Dumaresq and his daughter, the Oriental character of house and surroundings was everywhere most delightfully and undeniably apparent. The tiny round-topped slits pierced through the thickness of the massive wall; the floor covered with Damascus tiles and overlaid in part with pretty Eastern rugs; the pale-green dado and light-blue frieze of distemper on the sides, separated from one another by a verse of the Koran in breezy Arabic letters running round the room between them as a continuous border; the graceful hangings and delicately-covered drapery — all charmed Psyche, weary and heart-sick

though she was, with a delicious vague sense of Orientalism and novelty. As she lay on the crimson and blue divan l y the open window, rich perfumed whiffs of the Japanese medlars in full flower floated in upon the cool yet summer-like breeze; and the hill-side opposite hummed with insects busy among the blossoms of the great African clematis that fell in cataracts over the rocks and branches. For a moment she almost forgot her sorrow; the oculist was right: what she needed was a life of pure perception.

To Dumaresq, the charm of these novel surroundings was even greater and more striking than to his heart-broken Psyche. He admired throughout the house the infinite diversity and picturesqueness of the arches; here a semicircular doorway with richly-carved decorations in Arabesque patterns: there a pointed Moorish arcade of Saracenic type; and yonder, again, a flat-topped, horse-shoe arch of peculiarly-curved and bulging gracefulness, never to be seen anywhere else save here in Algeria. The long rambling passages, cool and gloomy for the hot African summer; the endless doors and nooks and niches; the grated windows and flat roof; the Oriental terrace; the up-and-down steps and uneven levels of the quaint little garden—formed a very ideal scene for an Arabian night's adventure of the fine old pattern. The gray old philosopher, startled into a momentary fit of imagination, almost expected to see Bluebeard's wife emerge unexpectedly from some darkling doorway, or the One-eyed Calender look in upon him unawares through the deep-set window-holes that gave upon the garden.

Yet it was pleasant to find, in spite of the persistent odour of Islam which pervaded the house, that the villa had been modernized and Anglicized after all in a way to suit the most luxurious English taste. It was four o'clock when they arrived at their temporary home, and at five a smiling little Swiss maid brought in a tea-tray with a steaming pot that reminded Psyche of dear old-fashioned Petherton. Tea and the Arabesque are too much all at once. So much modern comfort seems half out of place, side by side with such delicious antique Orientalism.

Psyche would have liked them to spend that evening by themselves in their own rooms; but her father overruled her wishes in that respect. It was best for her, he said, to go out to dinner; to mix at once with the world of Algiers: to conquer these morbid desires for seclusion: to throw herself as far as possible into the new situation. And Psyche, now clay in the potter's hands, yielded unwillingly to his wishes.

At the *table-d'hôte* they were shown to seats near the bottom of the table by a Swiss waiter with his hair cut short, and a general expression of bland good-nature pervading all his stumpy features. The seats opposite them were already occupied by two tall and very stately girls, accompanied by a young man of an open and naif, but somewhat unfinished, type of countenance. The girls quite frightened Psyche at the very first glance: they looked so queenly and magnificent and awful. Geraldine Maitland herself was hardly half so grand. Their ears were thin and delicately pink; their complexions shone with a transparent lustre; their necks were high and exquisitely moulded; their hands might have come out of a portrait of Sir Peter Lely's. Altogether, Psyche made up her mind at once that the strangers were at the very least duchesses: ladies of the *ancien régime* to a certainty, so calm and clear-cut and dainty were their lineaments. They weren't English; she could see that at a glance: there was something very foreign in the cut of their figures, and of their rich dresses. Psyche was sure she would never be able to say a word to them: so much high-born stateliness fairly took her breath away.

Presently a few more visitors came in, and, seating themselves, began to talk across the table with perfect sang-froid to the magnificent strangers. Psyche envied them their boldness of address. How could they dare to approach such aristocrats?

'Well, did you have your photographs taken, after all, Miss Vanrenen?' a lady opposite asked, with a smile of recognition.

'No, ma'am,' the tallest and stateliest of the beautiful girls answered promptly, with a polite nod. 'We went

into the city and had a lovely time, but we couldn't agree upon the currency question. We asked the photographer his lowest cash quotation for doing us in a group under the doorway here in Arab costume, and he gave us an estimate for as much as comes to fourteen dollars. Corona and I don't mind expense, but we're dead against extortion; and we consider fourteen dollars for taking your likeness in an Arab dress downright extortionate. So we concluded to do without the pictures for the present, and to save our specie for a better occasion.'

'I reckon,' the second queenly creature remarked, with a graceful bow, 'we can be taken just as well on Vesuvius when we go along to Naples.'

'That's so,' the first divine efflorescence answered, acquiescent. 'We don't stand out for the Arab dress in itself, you see, ma'am: we only want to be taken somewhere, with something distinctively Europian or African loafing around in the background—a mosque, or a cathedral, or a burning mountain—so as we can take the picture home and let folks see we're not a fraud—we've really travelled up and down the world a bit.'

'Still,' the brother said, looking round at his sisters with a half-regretful air, 'I must say I wanted Sirena to go the fourteen dollars blind for all that. You see, Mrs. Prendergast, we might have been taken all in a group under the Moorish archway there; and Miss Maitland would have joined us to complete the picture in that elegant airy Arab get-up of hers.'

'You know Miss Maitland, then?' Psyche ventured to put in timidly, with the natural diffidence of the latest comer.

'Cyrus don't know anybody else, almost,' the taller girl replied, with a smile. 'He was over here alone from Amurrica last fall, and spent the winter by himself in this city; and every letter he wrote us home was a sort of a bulletin about Geraldine Maitland. It was Geraldine Maitland went here; Geraldine Maitland went there; Geraldine Maitland says this; Geraldine Maitland thinks that; till we began to conclude at last for ourselves there weren't any other young ladies at all in Europe except Geraldine Maitland. So Corona and I—that's my sister

—we said to ourselves we'd come along this year and inspect for ourselves what sort of a person this girl Geraldine was, before Cyrus brought her home anyway for a permanency.'

'Now, Sirena!' the young man interposed, looking very sheepish, 'I'm a modest man; don't reveal my blushes.'

Psyche was fairly taken aback at this boldness of speech. She had met very few Americans before, and was little accustomed to so much freedom in the public discussion of unfinished matrimonial projects; but her awe at the queenly young women out-lived even the discovery of their Western accent, and she only said in a very timid tone:

'We know Miss Maitland, too. She's a very great friend of mine.'

'Then I guess Cyrus and you'll get on together,' Sirena said briskly, 'for whoever likes Geraldine Maitland confers a private obligation, I conjecture, upon Cyrus.'

'We are going to have a very great honour here,' the young man Cyrus interposed sharply, with an evident desire to change the conversation. 'Have you heard, sir, that the great philosopher, Haviland Dumaresq, intends to winter in this city?'

At the words, Psyche coloured up to the roots of her hair; but her father, bowing his stateliest and most distant bow, made answer serenely, without moving a muscle of that stoical face:

'Sir, my name *is* Haviland Dumaresq!'

He had scarcely spoken the word, when Cyrus Vanrenen rose from his seat and walked round the table with immense enthusiasm, but great deliberation.

'Mr. Dumaresq,' he said, seizing the old man's hand in his and wringing it hard, 'allow me the pleasure. Well, now, this is a very great honour, sir. I haven't read your books, Mr. Dumaresq—at least, to any extent, being otherwise engaged myself in business—but I know your name well; and in my country, sir, your works are much admired and highly respected. In the city where I reside—you don't happen to know Cincinnati? No; I thought as much—we set very great store by your valu-

able writings. The *Cincinnati Observer*, I recollect, on one occasion described you in one of its editorial columns as the "greatest metaphysician of this or any other age." That was high praise, Mr. Dumaresq, from the editorial columns of such an influential print as the *Cincinnati Observer*.'

'I'm glad to learn that I have deserved the commendation of so critical an authority upon philosophical questions,' Haviland Dumaresq answered with grave irony.

But his delicate sarcasm was thrown away upon the honest and innocent young American. That anyone could feel otherwise than pleased and flattered at the polite attentions of the *Cincinnati Observer* was an idea that could never for a moment have entered his good straightforward business head.

'Yes; it's a right smart paper,' he went on with friendly communicativeness. 'Largest circulation of any journal in the State of Ohio: and down the Mississippi Valley we go it blind on culture nowadays, I can tell you. Culture's on the boom in the West at present. No journal that didn't go it blind on culture and philosophy would stand a chance of success in the struggle for life in the Mississippi Valley. Survival of the fittest's our rule out there. We're down upon frauds, but we respect live concerns. If ever you were to light out for Cincinnati, Mr. Dumaresq, you'd find our citizens very appreciative: they'd be honoured to give you a warm welcome.'

'I am much obliged to them for their vivid personal interest in philosphy,' Haviland Dumaresq answered going on with his soup, and smiling inwardly.

'And is this your daughter, sir?' Cyrus asked once more, as he regained his place and glanced across at Psyche.

Psyche bowed, and faltered 'Yes' with very mixed feelings at being thus trotted out before a whole tableful of utter strangers.

'It must be a very great privilege, Miss Dumaresq,' Sirena remarked, in a clear, unembarrassed American voice, right across the table, 'to pass your life and receive your education in the midst of such cultured

Europian surroundings. Where did you make your recitations? I suppose, now, you've graduated?'

'I've *what?*' Psyche repeated, very much at sea.

'I suppose you've graduated?' Sirena said once more, with perfect self-possession. 'Completed the curriculum at some Europian academy?'

'Oh no,' Psyche answered, catching at her drift, and blushing crimson by this time, for the eyes of all the table were upon her. 'I—I'm not at all learned. I've been brought up at home. I never went away to school even anywhere.'

'Your poppa's been education enough by himself, I guess?' Corona put in with a friendly nod over the table towards Dumaresq: from which gesture Psyche concluded that the grand young lady meant to allude obliquely to her father.

'I expect you're a philosopher yourself by this time,' Sirena went on, glancing over at her curiously. 'Corona and I graduated at Vassar, and the philosophy class there read the first volume of the "Encyclopædic Philosophy" for their second year's recitation. It's stiff, Mr. Dumaresq, but our girls like it. Most of our students accept your fundamentals. They adopt your view of the cosmical substratum.'

Dumaresq twirled his gray moustache nervously. Criticism of this type was a decided novelty to him.

'It will be a pleasure to me to think,' he murmured, half aloud, 'as I approach my end, that my labours are approved of by the young ladies of the philosophy class at Vassar College. Few previous philosophers have been cheered by such success. Descartes and Leibnitz went to their graves unrefreshed by the applause of the young ladies of Vassar.'

'But in Amurrica nowadays we manage things better,' Sirena answered, dashing on, all unconscious still of his undercurrent of banter. 'Our women read and think some, Mr. Dumaresq, I assure you. Your philosophy's very much studied in Cincinnati. We run a Dumaresquian Society of our own, lately inaugurated in our city and when the members learn you're over here in Algiers with us, I expect the ladies and gentlemen of the club 'll send

along the pages out of their birthday books to get you to write your autograph on them. There's a heap of intelligent appreciation of literatoor in Amurrica: most of us'd be proud to have your autograph.'

'That's what I admire at so much in Europe,' Cyrus interposed with a pensive air. 'It brings you into contact with literatoor and art in a way you don't get it across our side. Why, lots of our ladies'd give their eyes almost to be brought up in the way Miss Dumaresq's been. In the thick of the literary society of Europe!'

Psyche smiled and answered nothing. Fortunately at that moment another member of the party intervened, and spared poor Psyche's blushes any further.

As they sat for awhile in their own little room before retiring for their first night in Africa, Haviland Dumaresq remarked to his daughter, with a slight shudder:

Did you ever meet anybody so terrible, Psyche, as that awful American man and his unspeakable sisters? Such a quality as reserve seems utterly unknown to them.'

'But do you know, papa,' Psyche answered, half smiling, 'they're really such kind, good girls, after all. They almost made me sink under the table with shame at dinner, of course; but I've been talking with them all the evening in the salon since, and I find, in spite of their terrible ways, they're so sweet and frank and natural, for all that. One of them—the one they call Sirena—told me I was a "real nice girl"; and when she said it, I could almost have kissed her, she seemed so kind and sympathetic and friendly.'

'Oh, the women are well enough,' her father answered with masculine tolerance: most men will tolerate a pretty girl, no matter how vulgar. 'But the brother! what a specimen of Cincinnati culture! It almost made me ashamed to think so many of my books had been sold in America when I reflected that that was the kind of man who must mostly buy them. And then the fulsomeness of the fellow's flattery! Why couldn't he leave poor philosophy alone? What has philosophy ever done to hurt him? I remember Mills saying to me once: "A thinker should never go into general society unless he knows he can go as a leader and a prophet." That young

man would go far to make one say the exact contrary: a thinker should never go at all, unless he knows he can pass in the crowd and remain unnoticed.'

CHAPTER XXX.

PSYCHE IN AFRICA.

For some time after her arrival in Algiers, Psyche seemed to improve a little on the air of Africa. In the first flush of the new Oriental life, her eyes grew stronger for awhile, as Dr. Godichau had confidently predicted. There was always something fresh to look at that roused for the moment her passing attention. And to have her attention roused was exactly what Psyche now most needed. Even a broken-hearted girl can't be placed for the first time in her life in the midst of that wonderful phantasmagoria of Eastern costume and Eastern manners without being momentarily excited and interested. Psyche wished to see, and she saw accordingly.

The three Vanrenens and Geraldine Maitland accompanied her everywhere on her first walks among those enchanted African hillsides. From the *pension* itself, to be sure, the sea was invisible; but a few hundred yards along the cactus-bordered lane that leads to Ali Cherif s villa brought them full in sight of that exquisite bay, and the high snow-capped summits of the glistening Djurjuras. With a little cry of surprise, the first time she went there, Psyche stopped for a moment and gazed entranced at the endless variety of that beautiful panorama. Straight below them, on its three rounded peaks, the town of Algiers, with its dazzling white houses, basked and glowed in the full African sunlight. The whole mass rose up sheer like a series of steps from the water's edge to the mouldering citadel of the Deys that crowns the hilltop. In the antique Arab quarter, each house stood square and flat as a die, whitewashed without, though doubtless dirty enough within; and clustering as they did in tiers one above another with their flat roofs, on the steep slope, nothing could be quainter or more artistic in effect than their general outline. All round,

the suburbs spread over the ravine-cut hills, each French château, or Moorish villa, or Arab palace, gleaming apart, surrounded by its own green stretch of olive orchard or pine-grove.

To Psyche, all these Southern sights were new and surprising. She had never set her foot before beyond the four sea-walls of Britain. The tall cypress hedges, the waving date-palms, the scrubby vineyards, the canes and aloes, which to most of us only recall that familiar Riviera, were novelty itself to the untravelled Petherton girl. The glowing white houses with their green tiles, the mosques and minarets, the domes and cupolas, the arcades and the Arabs, the brown-legged boys and veiled women on the road below, all showed her at once she was indeed in Islam. She sighed profoundly. So this was Africa! This was the land where her painter lay buried.

But it was beautiful, too, undeniably beautiful. She felt as she gazed something of that calm subdued pleasure one might naturally feel in some sweet garden cemetery where one's loved one slept among bright clustered flowers. The first poignant anguish of disappointment and loss was over now, and a tender regret had grown up in its place which was almost pleasant. Psyche's heart was fading so gently away that she could look with a certain half-tearful joy at that exquisite view over the sweeping blue bay and the clambering white town that ramped and climbed in successive steps from the purple harbour to the green summit of the Sahel.

Gradually, however, during those first few days in Africa, it began to dawn upon Psyche that the Vanrenens were wealthy—enormously wealthy. And gradually, too, as the same idea came home to Haviland Dumaresq's mind, Psyche noticed with a certain little thrill of horror that her father began to make excuses and apologies for Cyrus Vanrenen's brusque American manner.

'The young man's really a good-hearted young fellow,' he said more than once to Psyche, 'though of course uncultured. But I dare say he might be brought into shape after a time. Young men are plastic—remarkably plastic.'

One of those days, as Psyche and Geraldine returned

from a country walk, they found Haviland Dumaresq, in his gray morning suit and his rough woollen cap, engaged in examining the Arab wares which a couple of tawny pedlars in turban and burnous had unrolled from their pack and spread on the ground under the open piazza.

The scene was, indeed, a curiously picturesque one. On one side stood the great European philosopher, tall and erect, with his pointed gray beard and his luminous eyes, the furthest artistic development, as it were, of the Western idea in costume and humanity. On the other hand lay stretched the two lithe and graceful Orientals, in their flowing robes and not unbecoming dirt, with their oval faces and big melancholy eyes, reclined at their ease on their own Persian rugs, flung down for sale on the tiled floor of the piazza. All round stood piled in picturesque confusion the quaint bric-à-brac which forms the universal stock-in-trade of all these lazy and romantic old-world packmen. Coarse hand-made pots of red and yellow earthenware; tortoiseshell guitars and goat-skin tambourines; inlaid brass trays, with Arabic inscriptions in silver lettering; native jewellery, set thick with big beads of bright-red coral and lumps of lapis lazuli; swords and daggers of antique make; embroideries rich with silver and gold; pierced brazen lamps stolen from desecrated Tunisian mosques; haiks and burnouses of Tlemçen workmanship. All lay tumbled on the ground in one great glittering mass, and Haviland Dumaresq, with attentive eyes, stood propped against the parapet of the arcaded balustrade and glanced at them hard in philosophic reverie.

'Hello! pedlars again!' Cyrus Vanrenen exclaimed with boyish glee as he opened the door and came face to face with them. 'They've set up store in the front piazza! Been making any purchase to-day, Mr. Dumaresq? The one-eyed calender there' (for the younger of the Arabs had lost an eye), 'he knows how to charge; he's a rare old rascal. How much do you want for the ostrich egg, mister? Combien l'œuf, mon ami—comprenez-vous—combien?'

He took the thing up in his hands as he spoke. It was a half-egg richly set as a cup in Kabyle metal-work,

and suspended from three graceful silver chains to hang from the ceiling.

'Fifty francs,' the Arab answered in French, showing all his teeth in the regular melancholy Arab smile.

'Here you are, then,' Cyrus said, taking out his purse. 'Tenez; vous voici. May I offer it to you for a little souvenir, Miss Dumaresq? It'd look real pretty hung down from the gas in the centre of a parlour.'

'Oh, Mr. Vanrenen!' Geraldine cried, aghast; 'you oughtn't to pay what they ask, offhand, you know. You'll spoil the market. You should offer them half. You ought to *marchander* for everything with the Arabs. If you'd *marchandé'd* for that, you'd have got it easily for at least thirty.'

'I guess so,' Cyrus answered with a careless air, handing the egg over to Psyche, who took it half irresolutely. 'But time's money, you see, across our way—a fact which these gentlemen in the bare legs don't seem to catch on at; and twenty francs ain't worth standing and bargaining about in the sun for half an hour.'

'Oh, thank you ever so much!' Psyche said, admiring it. 'Do you really mean I'm to take it, Mr. Vanrenen? How very kind of you! Isn't it lovely, papa? It'd look just sweet hung up in the recess over the sideboard at Petherton.'

'It *is* pretty,' her father said, taking it from her with evident embarrassment. 'Extremely pretty in its own curious barbaric way, though, of course, it exhibits the usual extravagant barbaric tendency towards reckless profusion of ornament over the entire field. In the best decorative art, the ornament, instead of being lavished on all parts alike, is concentrated on important constructive features.'

'Oh, you look here, Cyrus!' Corona cried, gazing up at the wall, where the Arabs had hung an exquisite embroidered satin *portière*. 'Ain't that just lovely? Ain't the colours sweet? Did you ever see anything prettier in your life than that, now?'

'And wouldn't it look elegant,' Sirena continued in the same breath, 'hung up in the archway between the drawing-room and the ante-room at Cincinnati?'

Cyrus put his head on one side and eyed it critically. It was indeed a charming piece of old Oriental needlework, torn from the spoils of some far inland mosque. The ground was of dainty old-gold satin; and the embroidery, rich in many tints of silk, was thoroughly Saracenic in type and colouring.

'Combien?' Cyrus asked laconically, after a brief pause. His stock of French was remarkable for its scantiness; but he beat it out thin for active service, and made each word do the utmost duty of which it was capable.

'Douze cent francs,' the Arab merchant answered, holding up the fingers of both hands, and then two over, as an aid to comprehension.

'Je vous donne six cent,' Cyrus observed tentatively, well warned by Geraldine's superior wisdom.

'C'est à vous, monsieur. Prenez-le,' the Arab answered, as he bowed and shrugged his shoulders with perfect coolness.

And Cyrus, pulling out the twenty-four pounds in good French gold, handed it over at once, and seized the *portière*.

'That's for you, Sirena,' he said, laying the thing lightly across his eldest sister's arm. 'You can hang it in the archway when we go back to Amurrica.'

'You're real good, Cyrus,' Sirena answered, kissing him fraternally before the scandalized faces of those disconcerted Arabs. (The conduct of these Frank women is really too abandoned!)

'That's just like Cyrus!' Corona said laughingly. 'He don't know how to get rid of his dollars fast enough. If he went into the market and took a fancy to a camel, I guess he'd purchase it to take it across to Amurrica. Yes, sir; he's a first-rate hand at spending money, Cyrus is. But, then, you see, he's a first-rate hand, come to think, at making it.'

'It's easier to make a dollar in Amurrica than a shilling in England,' Cyrus answered apologetically; 'and it's easier to spend it than to spend sixpence. That's what I always say when I come across this side. A man's got to work pretty hard at his spending hereabouts, or he

finds the money accumulate inconveniently in his waistcoat-pocket.'

'I've never been inconvenienced in that way myself,' Dumaresq murmured with grim irony.

'No, sir, I reckon you haven't,' Cyrus answered with refreshing American frankness. 'But, then, you've never put your brains into the business, or you'd have struck it rich. You've been otherwise occupied. You've made what's better than money—fame, reputation, an honoured name in the world's history. Why, I'd rather have written the "Encyclopædic Philosophy" any day, Mr. Dumaresq, than boss the biggest and most successful pork concern in all Cincinnati!'

Haviland Dumaresq shrank into his shoes. Great heavens, what an ideal of earthly success! And yet—the man was evidently rich. Besides, Americans have the plasticity of youth. Young communities resemble in some respects young individuals. As is the mass, so are the units. There's no knowing what you may not make out of an American, if you catch him young, take him in hand firmly, and expose him consistently for two or three years to the mellowing influence of a fresh environment. Americans have plenty of undeveloped tact: it needs but intercourse with more refined societies to bring that latent faculty visibly to the surface.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A NILE TOURIST.

SOMEWHERE about the same time when these things were passing at Algiers, the Reverend Francis Austen Linnell, Vicar of Hambledon-cum-Thornyhaugh, Northumberland, sat with his legs dangling over a huge block of sculptured sandstone, among the massive ruins of the vast and many-chambered temple of Rameses the Great by the quay at Luxor.

The Reverend Francis Austen Linnell, to say the truth, was in a gloomy humour. He revenged himself upon the world, indeed, by hammering with his stick at the crumbling figures of Khem and Isis that covered the

huge sandstone block on whose top he was seated. Time and invaders had gently spared those sculptured forms for six thousand years; the Persian, the Greek, the Roman, and the Arab, had all swept over the land, and let them go by unhurt: but the Reverend Francis Austen Linnell, with his iron-shod stick, took a malicious pleasure now, like a veritable British tourist that he was, in defacing the nose of the gray goddess whom so many ages and so many conquerors had looked down upon without injury. Things had gone badly with the last of the Linnells on the Upper Nile. He had pushed as far up towards Wady Halfa as the courtesy of the military authorities would permit during those stormy times: he had questioned every real or supposed refugee from Khartoum whom he could find anywhere among the native bazaars; but he had elicited nothing of the slightest importance about his half-brother or his cousin. Their fate remained as absolutely doubtful as the fate of all the other defenders of the conquered city. Vague rumours and surmises there were plenty, to be sure, but of solid fact or certain assurance, not a single item.

So the Reverend Francis Austen Linnell had returned to Luxor in a very ill humour, and had left his dahabeeah now moored close under the bank by the Karnak Hotel, while he himself sat, disconsolate and alone, chipping bits from the bas-reliefs, among the ruins of the temple.

To be sure, there was some hope of news still; for a strange report went about at Luxor that day. A European refugee, it was rumoured—a newspaper correspondent or somebody of the sort, who had remained in Khartoum up to the very last moment—had yesterday arrived across the desert at Assouan. Now, if this European refugee turned out a reality, there might still be some chance of learning Sir Austen's fate from a presentable witness. So the Reverend Frank sat and gazed around with a somewhat contemptuous glance at the mass of dust and dirt and rubbish that encumbers the base of that gigantic ruin, and waited impatiently for the expected traveller.

Of course Frank Linnell was not alone. Nobody is

ever alone for ten seconds in Egypt. The custom of the country does not permit solitude. A crowd of pestering little native boys, picturesquely arrayed in torn and ragged commissariat corn-sacks, with flies clustering thickly on their bleared eyes, held out their tawny hands, and showed their hideous artificial sores, and clamoured for backshish with true Egyptian persistence. The Reverend Frank regarded them cynically.

'No backshish,' he answered in an angry tone, threatening them with his stick, and laying about him roundly over their naked shoulders. 'Not one penny of backshish will any of you get from me to-day. Go along, I say. Don't want you here. Leave me alone, can't you?'

The boys fell back for a moment, still crying 'Backshish, backshish!' and regarded the stranger with a suspicious glance. Frank Linnell rose, and strolled idly towards another part of the building. The boys followed him through the deep dust, hustling him as he went with genuine Oriental eagerness.

'Rameses! You want see Rameses? Me very good guide! Me show you Rameses!' they 'ed in chorus in their broken English, dancing befor rank Linnell's footsteps, raising clouds of dust as they went, and leading the way triumphantly towards the great colossal seated statue.

'Me want no backshish,' one of them insinuated coaxingly with a persuasive air. 'Want to show English gentleman de way. Me very good boy. Dis way for see Rameses, and no backshish.'

Frank Linnell was a hasty-tempered man, and he was also gifted with the common British incapacity for grasping the idea that anybody else should be unable to comprehend his own language, if quite distinctly, articulately, and loudly spoken. So he paused on his march for a second, and leaned his back impressively against the base of one of Amenhotep's great sculptured propylons in the central temple.

'Now, you look here, you boys,' he observed with dignity, in his most didactic tone, holding up one warning forefinger, as if he were addressing his own national school at Hambledon-cum-Thornyhaugh in the county

of Northumberland: 'I've seen Rameses the Great fifty times already, in every possible form, shape, and material —sitting and standing, fighting and feasting, on foot or in his chariot, life-size or colossal—till I'm sick and tired of him. I don't want to see Rameses the Great again, in any place, position, dress, or fashion, as long as I live: and I hope to goodness I may never more set eyes upon him anywhere. I don't like Rameses—do you understand?—I object to Rameses: I disapprove of Rameses: and I don't care for antiquities. I came out here in this precious temple this morning to try and get a little peace and quiet, not to be bothered with boys and colossal statues. And if any one of you fellows comes one step nearer me'—he drew a line in the dust with his stick as he spoke—'if any one of you fellows dares to step one inch across that line, all I can say is,' lifting his stick suggestively in the precise attitude of the Pharaohnic hero—'I'll give him Rameses across his back and shoulders before he's another ten minutes older.'

The boys listened gravely to every word of this succinct address, and then, seizing with avidity upon the one word of the whole which they really understood, vociferated once more in chorus:

'Yes, sah: Rameses, sah: me very good guide: me show you Rameses: dis way, sah, for Rameses de Great: dis way to Rameses.'

The parson from Northumberland poised himself firmly against the half-buried propylon, and resigned himself to a comical look of despair at the little brown ragamuffins, who still held out their eight or ten hands persistently for backshish. As he stood there, the very picture of the baffled Briton in the midst of his foes, whose light infantry proved far too nimble for his heavy guns to disperse, an Arab, as he thought, approached by the door from the opposite direction, and walked straight up to him with outstretched hand, as if bent on entering into conversation with the usual practical object of obtaining backshish.

The newcomer was dressed in semi-European clothes, with an old red fez stuck jauntily on his head, as is the fashion with temple guardians and other such minor

hangers-on of the bankrupt Egyptian Government. Frank Linnell immediately suspected another attempt to rob him of a fee, under pretence of asking for the official permit to visit the antiquities of Upper Egypt; so he waved the stranger aside impatiently with his warning hand, and observed once more, very loudly, in his native tongue—the only one he could use with fluency:

'No backshish! no backshish! I've been here before. I've fee'd every precious soul—man, woman, or child—connected in any way with the management of this temple; and not a piastre more will one of you get out of me. Not a piastre more. Understand. Not a solitary piastre.'

To his great surprise, the stranger, instead of bowing low and retreating politely, smiled a benign smile, and answered in English, of an unexpectedly flowing, yet distinctly Hibernian character:

'Ye're mistaken, Mr. Linnell. It's Mr. Linnell I have the pleasure of addressing, isn't it? Ah, yes; I thought so. They told me at the hotel a clergyman of yer name had been asking when I'd be likely coming down the river; so I thought I'd just step out at once, and see if I could find ye.'

Frank Linnell gave a sudden start of astonishment. Could this be the refugee?

'You're not the correspondent they spoke of, who's escaped from Khartoum, surely?' he cried in some excitement.

The stranger nodded a courteous assent.

'Me name's Considine,' he answered, with conscious pride—'one of the fighting Considines of County Cavan. I was correspondent at Khartoum for the *Daily Telephone*. Ah, ye may well stare, sirr, for it's a narrow squeak indeed I've had of it. When the city was taken, those nigger fellows of the Mahdi's, they just chopped me up piecemeal into small fragments; and as I lay there on the ground in sections, near the Bourré Gate, thinking of me poor old mother in Ireland, "Considine, me boy," says I to meself, or as much as was left of me, "diamond cement'll never be able to stick ye completely together again." But, somehow, they dovetailed the bits after all, and

took me into the hospital; and I pulled through, by the kind offices of some Soudanese ladies, who were good enough to adopt me; and here I am, sirr, a miserable wreck as far as legs and arms go—why, those heathen hacked me to pieces, so that ye couldn't lay a sixpence between the scars on me body, I give ye me word for it—but ready to go to the world's end to help a fellow-countryman in distress, or a lady who stands in need of assistance. Well, sirr, I'm glad to meet ye, and to make yer acquaintance, for I knew yer brother, and I can give ye later news of him than ye'll get in the newspapers.'

The Reverend Frank drew himself up on his dignity a little stiffly.

'Sir Austen Linnell was my cousin, not my brother,' he answered, with official vagueness, for he could never quite bring himself to acknowledge the existence of the actress-woman's son, who had deprived him of his birthright.

'Tut, tut, tut, man,' the correspondent answered, not without a faint tinge of wholesome contempt in his tone. 'I knew them both—yer cousin and yer brother—and a finer man or a braver than Charles Linnell, whom ye want to disown, I never set eyes on. Sure, ye needn't be ashamed of him.'

And seating himself on the broken pillar by the clergyman's side, Considine began to narrate in full, with much Irish spirit and many graphic details, the whole story of the siege, and his own almost miraculous escape from Khartoum.

'But what ye'll be wanting to know most,' he said at last, after he'd dilated at some length upon the fragmentary condition in which the Mahdi's troops had left his various limbs on the ground at Khartoum, and the gradual way in which 'the chips had been picked up and welded together again,' as with some pardonable exaggeration he phrased it—'what ye'll be wanting to know, is how yer brother came out of all this trouble.'

'Did he come out of it at all?' the Reverend Frank inquired, with a little undercurrent of tremulousness in his anxious tone—'or Sir Austen either? Have you any accurate information about their fate to give me?'

'Accurate information, is it? Well, it isn't just the moment for observing accurately, ye must own yerself, when ye're lying about loose in pieces, waiting for somebody to pick ye up and put ye together again,' Considine retorted gaily. 'But all I can tell ye is this: on the morning when the niggers broke like ants into Khartoum, yer cousin and yer brother were both alive; and if *I* got away, why shouldn't they too? They were as clever as I was.'

'It's very improbable,' Mr. Frank Linnell replied incredulously, yet much disconcerted. 'They were both reported "most likely dead" in the newspaper despatches.'

'Were they so, now?' Considine echoed with profound interest.

'Yes. Stragglers and refugees even said their bodies had been identified near the Bourré Gate.'

Considine looked up with a smile of relief.

'They did, did they? Then ye may take it for granted,' he answered, in a tone of profound conviction, 'that they're both this minute alive and kicking.'

'Why so?' the parson asked with a thrill of unpleasant surprise. Family affection didn't prompt him to desire the escape of either of his two respected relations.

'Why, have ye never observed,' Considine answered with great good-humour, and the demonstrative air of a mathematician proving a theorem, 'that whatever's put in the newspapers about anybody ye know yerself is as sure as fate to be utterly mistaken? I'm a newspaper man meself, and I ought to be an unprejudiced observer of journalism. Take yer own case, now. Weren't ye kilt in a railway accident? Didn't the newspapers report ye entirely dead? Well, and when I went to the hotel just now, they told me ye were here. "Impossible," says I; "the man's kilt long ago." "But he came to life again," says the hotel-keeper; "it was only a railway accident." "To be sure," says I; "how stupid of me not to have thought of that before! I might have known he was alive—for didn't I see his death meself in the newspaper?" '

'Such cases must be very rare,' Mr. Frank Linnell responded with British caution.

'Rare, is it, sirr?' the correspondent echoed hastily.

'Well, then, take me own case again. Wasn't I kilt in Afghanistan, as the *Times* itself announced? and didn't I turn up for all that six months later at Quetta? Wasn't I kilt with Stanley on the Upper Congo; and didn't we all come out again, after all, alive and well, at Zanzibar? Wasn't I kilt in Khartoum the other day, and cut up into sausage-meat for the use of the commissariat; and ain't I on me way down to Cairo now, to offer me services and the remains of me body to me own Government for future expeditions? No, no, sirr; depend upon it, if ever a man's kilt in the newspapers, as sure as fate, it's a very good symptom. Why do I give Gordon up, though there are some that think he's living still? Why, just because the newspapers were afraid to kill him. And why do I believe yer brother's alive, and your cousin too? Why, just because the newspapers, ye tell me, without one qualm of doubt, have got rid of them altogether.'

'But you say you were in Khartoum for three months after its fall,' Frank Linnell objected. 'Did you ever hear or see anything of either of my real or supposed relations?'

'And d'ye think we went paying calls and leaving pasteboards in Khartoum after the Mahdi's people came?' Considine retorted contemptuously. 'Why, sirr, till the night I stole away with a small body of natives going north on duty, I never dared to show me nose outside me own quarters, where the Soudanese ladies I told ye of were kindly taking care of me—for I flatter meself I always got on with the ladies. But one thing I can tell ye, and that's certain.' He dropped his voice to a confidential whisper. 'At Dongola I met a water-carrier who'd been in Khartoum to the end, and he recognised me at once when he saw me in the bazaar. And he told me he'd observed a white man, disguised as an Indian Mussulman, in Khartoum town a month after the capture, whose description exactly answered to yer brother's. At the time I thought he must be mistaken; for I saw Linnell cut down, meself, in the great square; but now ye tell me the newspapers have kilt him, I'd stake me reputation it was Charlie Linnell the fellow saw, and that ye'll welcome him home yet some day at yer parsonage in England.'

CHAPTER XXXII.

SHOPPING.

A FEW days after her arrival in Algiers, Psyche had so far recovered from her fatigue that Geraldine Maitland arranged a party to go down into the town together.

The winter visitors at Algiers live entirely on the Mustapha hill, at a distance of some two or three miles from the town and harbour. A breakneck Arab path, sunk deep in the soil like a Devonshire lane, leads the foot-passenger in a straight line by tumble-down steps to the outskirts and the shore: omnibuses and carriages follow the slower zigzags of a broad modern highway that winds by gentle gradients round numerous elbows to the town wall at the Porte d'Isly. Psyche and the Vanrenens under Geraldine's guidance, took the comfortable tram (the horse-car, Cyrus called it) by this latter route, and descended gradually to the ramparts of the French engineers.

Once within the gate, in Algiers proper, Psyche felt herself immediately in the very thick and heart of Islam. Who shall describe that wonderful dramatic Oriental world—ever old, yet ever new—busy with human life as bees at a swarming, or ants when a stick has been poked into their nest; all seething and fermenting in a Babel of tongues, and hurrying and scurrying on every side for no possible or conceivable earthly reason? Algiers is the most fascinating and animated of Mediterranean towns. Dirty, malodorous, African if you will, but alive all over, and intensely attractive and alluring for all that, in its crowded streets and courts and alleys. Psyche was not lucky enough to meet on her entry a laden caravan of solemn, long-legged camels, striding placidly out on their start for the desert; but the donkeys, the mules, the Moors, the Arabs, the infinite variety of colour and costume, amply sufficed to keep her attention alive as they threaded their way through that quaint jumble of all Mediterranean and African nationalities.

Geraldine, to whom all this was as familiar as Petherton, led them lightly through the vestibule of the town.

Psyche was amused, in spite of her sadness, at the curious jumble of transparent incongruities in that antique new-fangled Franco-Moorish Algiers. Here, a little French *épicerie*, ensconced half hidden in an ill-lighted shop, where Provençal bourgeois folk served out small odds and ends to bareheaded negresses: there, an Arab café, darker and dirtier still, where dusky, cross-legged figures in Oriental costume, innocent of the laundry, smoked doubtful tobacco and tossed off cups of black steaming Mocha; and yonder, again, a little bazaar for Moorish curiosities, where a Barbary Jew in dark-coloured turban, jacket, and sash, ogled them in with oleaginous smile to inspect his cheap stock of Birmingham antiquities. At every step Psyche stopped irresistibly to gaze and smile; the town itself and all its stream of passengers unrolled itself in long and endless perspective like a living panorama before her attentive eyes.

They passed a big square with a well-kept garden of the formal French sort; a theatre that for size and imposing front might almost compare with the finest in Paris; a close-piled insanitary Arab quarter, by no means running with milk and rose-water; a tangle of lanes threading their way steeply up hill in every possible direction except a straight line, for which native architects appear to harbour an instinctive dislike; a narrow courtyard open to the sky; a whitewashed mosque, where a respectable gray-bearded native cadi squatted cross-legged on the floor doing equal justice by summary process between his Arab neighbours. Railways, tramcars, donkeys, and omnibuses; a European brass band, and a group of red-cloaked Arabs from the desert; Moorish squalor, dirt, and discomfort; the kiosks and journals and loungers of the boulevards! The main street through which they made their tortuous way was arcaded like Paris; but, oh, what a difference in the surging crowd that thronged and filled it in unending variety! Arab, Moor, Kabyle, and Negro; Jewesses with their heads enclosed in tight black skull-caps, and their chins tied up as if they suffered perennially from an aggravated complication of mumps and toothache; and Mussulman

women who showed above their veils but their great black eyes, yet coquetted so freely with those and their twitching fingers in the corners of their robes that Cyrus almost ceased to wonder as he passed at their prudent lords' precautionary measures.

They turned round by the brand-new minarets of the modernized cathedral, and entered the narrow little Rue de la Lyre. Ahmed ben Abd-er-Rahman (may Allah increase him!) has a Moorish shop in that dark thoroughfare, which is the joy and delight of all feminine sojourners in the tents of Shem. Corona's face lighted up with pleasure.

'Why, we're going to Abd-er-Rahman's!' she exclaimed with much delight. 'That's nice, Miss Dumaresq. I do just love a good day's shopping down here in the Moorish part of the city.'

'Don't call me "Miss Dumaresq,"' Psyche said gently. 'Call me Psyche, won't you?'

Corona drew back in genuine hesitation.

'May I?' she asked. 'Well, I do call that real nice of you, now! I was afraid to be too much at home with Haviland Dumaresq's daughter, you see. But you ain't set up. It's right kind and friendly of you—that's just what it is! And will you call us Sirena and Corona?'

Psyche in her turn drew back, hesitating.

'Why, I thought you so grand when I first saw you,' she said, taken aback. 'I was afraid to talk to you, almost, I was so dreadfully frightened.'

'Well, I do call that good, now!' Corona cried, laughing. 'Say, Sirena, here's Psyche says when she first saw us she was most afraid to speak at table to us!'

'Well, I want to know!' Sirena exclaimed, much amused. 'Afraid of you and me, Corona!'

They both laughed at it as a very good joke; and Psyche, she knew not why, laughed too, for their merriment was contagious. They had reached by this time a darkling corridor in the dingy side-street, under whose gloomy arch Geraldine plunged undismayed, and led them all blindfold into a central court, where Psyche found herself at once, to her sudden surprise, in a perfect paradise of Oriental art, set out in an unaffected living

museum of Oriental architecture. The courtyard was tiled and roofed in with glass; round the lower floor ran a pretty open arcade of Saracenic arches; the upper story was also arcaded, but hemmed in by a balustrade of pierced woodwork, carved and latticed like a medieval screen in exquisite patterns. All round lay the usual farrago of Eastern curiosities: Damascus lamps, and Persian saddle-cloths, and Morocco jars, and Algerian embroideries, all scattered about loosely in picturesque confusion. In the centre sat solid old Abd-er-Rahman himself in dignified silence—a massive old Moor in an embroidered coat and ample turban; he rose as Geraldine Maitland entered, and bowed her into his shop with stately courtesy.

'You're tired, dear,' Geraldine said to her friend, as she turned to mount the stairs to the second floor. 'The girls and I'll go up and look at the things in the gallery there. Mr. Vanrenen, you'll stop down here with Psyche, and find her a chair, for she mustn't fatigue herself.'

'Why, certainly,' Cyrus answered, nothing loath. He had a vested interest in Psyche now. He had seen a good deal of the pink-and-white English girl during these last few days—more white than pink, of late, unhappily: and what with Sirena's hints and Geraldine Maitland's obduracy, he had almost begun to consider with himself the leading question whether one high-toned Englishwoman might not do at a pinch almost as well in the end as another. So he sat and talked with her with a very good grace, while Corona and Sirena cheapened trays and Koran stands with Abd-er-Rahman himself in the upper gallery.

They waited long, and Cyrus at last began to covet in turn some of the pretty embroideries that lay heaped in piles on one another around them. He turned a few over carelessly with his hands.

'There's a beauty, now,' he said, taking up a long strip of antique Tunisian needlework and holding it out at arm's-length before Psyche. 'I expect Corona wouldn't mind that bit, Miss Dumaresq.'

'It *is* lovely,' Psyche said—'as lovely as a picture.

How much—an artist—would admire a piece like that now, Mr. Vanrenen!'

She said 'an artist'; but she meant in her heart Linnell. Her mind went back at a bound to those old days at Petherton. Cyrus threw it lightly and gracefully round her shoulder. Your American, even though unskilled in the courtesy of words, has always a certain practical gracefulness in his treatment of women. He regards them as something too fragile and costly to be roughly handled.

'It becomes you, Miss Dumaresq,' he said, gazing at her admiringly. 'You look quite a picture in it. It'd make up beautifully for evening dress, I expect.'

Psyche trembled lest he should buy that too.

'Papa wouldn't like me to wear it, though,' she put in hastily. 'I'm sure he wouldn't let me. It's against his principles.'

Cyrus leaned back on his chair and surveyed her with a certain distant chivalrous regard.

'That's a pity,' he answered, 'for I'd like to give it to you.'

Psyche made haste to decline the kindly-meant suggestion.

'Oh, how good of you!' she cried. 'But you mustn't, please. I'd rather you wouldn't. Why, you seem to buy everything that takes your fancy. How awfully rich you must be, Mr. Vanrenen!'

'Well, I ain't in want,' Cyrus admitted frankly. 'I can afford most anything I feel I'm in need of.'

'I've never known any rich people before,' Psyche said abstractedly, for want of something better to say. 'Papa thinks poor people are more the right sort for us to know.'

'No?' Cyrus murmured with genuine regret. He liked Psyche, and he wanted her to like him.

Psyche played with the corner of the embroidery, embarrassed. She felt she had said one of the things she had rather have left unsaid.

'But he likes *you*,' she went on with her charming smile. 'In fact, we both like you.'

'No?' Cyrus said again, in a very pleased voice.

'Now, I call that real nice and friendly of him, Miss Dumaresq.'

Psyche folded up the embroidery and replaced it on the heap. This interview was beginning to get embarrassingly long. Just as she was wondering what on earth she could say next, Geraldine Maitland came down the steps with Corona and Sirena to relieve her from her painfully false position.

'Where next?' Cyrus exclaimed, jumping up from his seat. 'Sirena always goes the rounds of the stores regularly when she comes into the city.'

'To the photographer's,' Sirena said; 'I want some of those lovely views of the ragged boys. These little Arab chaps are just sweet, Miss Maitland.'

So they went to Famin's in the Rue Bab-Azoun, where Sirena had seen the particular photographs she so specially coveted.

Psyche's eyes gave her no trouble. She entered the shop and gazed around it fearlessly. On an easel in the corner was a painting of an Arab girl standing under a doorway in the native town. Psyche's heart came up into her mouth as her gaze fell upon it. She was no judge of art, but love had taught her better than years in museums or galleries could ever have done to know one artist's hand. She recognised in a moment that unmistakable touch. It was a specimen of Linnell's Algerian subjects!

The colour fled from her cheek all at once. She gazed at it hard, and took it all in slowly. Then, all of a sudden, as she still looked, for the first time since she arrived in Algeria, the shop and the picture faded away before her. She groped her way over to a chair in her distress. Thick darkness enveloped the world. Cyrus, astonished, led her over to a chair.

'Thank you,' she said, as she seated herself upon it. 'Geraldine—my eyes——'

She could get no further.

Geraldine understood it all with feminine quickness. She beckoned Cyrus out of the shop quietly.

'Run for a fiacre,' she said, herself all trembling. 'You'll find one opposite the mosque in the square.

Her eyes have gone again. I know what's the matter. That's one of the pictures Mr. Linnell painted. Psyche was very much attached to him indeed, and he died at Khartoum. I tell you this to secure your help. Don't say anything more about it than you can avoid at the Orangers. And tell Corona and Sirena to keep it quite quiet.

Cyrus nodded assent.

'You may depend upon me,' he said; and he was off at full speed to get the fiacre. When it arrived, he led out Psyche with tender care, and placed her like a brother in the corner of the cushions. They drove up in silence, for the most part, Geraldine alone having the courage to make occasional pretences at conversation. By the time they reached the gate of the Orangers, the veil had fallen again from Psyche's eyes. But her father, who met her at the door with his searching glance, was not to be deceived.

'Your sight went again,' he said with awe as he scanned her pallid face. And Psyche, too truthful to try to hide it, answered merely, 'Yes, papa,' and hid her sorrow straightway in her own little bedroom.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A NEW SUITOR.

TIME marched on, as indeed it often does in this prosaic world of ours; and Psyche's life at the Pension des Orangers grew daily more and more like her life at Petherton. The first flush of freshness in the African world wore gradually away; and even as it disappeared Psyche's eyesight returned once more to something of the same deplorable condition as at the Wren's Nest. Only, a general dimness began at last to supervene. Instead of periods of occasional loss of sight, interspersed with periods of perfect vision, Psyche was conscious of a constant decrease in visual power, so that she only saw with clearness and distinctness now when she made a definite effort of attention towards any particular object. The fact was, the change was but evanescent. The cause of

her malady still remained untouched. Her sight was failing.

She passed much of her time all those days with Geraldine Maitland: much also with Cyrus, Sirena, and Corona. Geraldine, indeed, did all she could to throw the four together. The girls, she thought, were nice lively companions for poor broken-hearted Psyche: they roused and stimulated her: and Geraldine even cherished some faint hope that Cyrus's good-nature and kindliness of heart might at last engage Psyche's passing interest. For Geraldine had a genuine affection—of a sort—for Cyrus: knowing his profound admiration for 'high-toned' Englishwomen, she would have been delighted—if only she could have handed him over to Psyche.

With this end in view, she had concocted from the beginning a little scheme of her own to create in the genial young American's mind an interest in the pretty and shrinking English girl. Before the Dumaresqs' arrival she had arranged with Cyrus that he should pay nearly one-half their bill at the *pension*, in the utmost secrecy; and so had created a proprietary feeling by anticipation towards both father and daughter in the generous Westerner's chivalrous soul. For Cyrus, though engaged, like all the rest of Cincinnati, in the fluctuating concerns of the wholesale pork market, had a nature as tender as any English gentleman's; and his feeling of protection towards Psyche might easily ripen under these peculiar circumstances into one of a far more intimate and personal kind.

As for Geraldine, her own attitude towards her American admirer was very peculiar. She liked Cyrus immensely; but, as Cyrus himself rightly divined, the money alone stood in the way. She could never endure the world should think she had sold herself for Cincinnati gold. A little wholesome opposition, indeed, on Mrs. Maitland's part might have worked wonders for Cyrus's chance of success; but Mrs. Maitland, sharp woman of the world as she was by nature and training, was yet not quite sharp enough to perceive that opportunity for carrying her point. Her tactics had less of finesse about them than of sheer persistence. She saw

her end clearly, and made for it, with most unwomanly directness, by what seemed to her the plain straight path. And Geraldine, who could be led but could not be driven, found her mother's advocacy of Cyrus's claims a considerable factor against the honest and manly young American's chances.

A month or two had passed, and Sirena sat one day in the garden on the hillside slope under the pleasant shade of a drooping pepper-tree. The full African sun was pouring down his splendour on terraces rich with rose and geranium. Tall irises flaunted their beauty in the air, and bees hummed busily around the heavy-scented loquat trees. Psyche and Corona were seated on the bench in the tennis court below, watching a set between some others of the visitors; for the irrepressible Briton, wherever he goes, *must* have his tennis lawn. Sirena laid down her novel with a yawn. A shadow from behind fell across the path. She looked up suddenly. It was Haviland Dumaresq.

The old man seated himself by her side with a fatherly air. He had learned to like Sirena by this time; she was always so kind to his precious Psyche. When Psyche's eyes were most seriously affected, it was Sirena who came to her bedroom to read to her; when Psyche couldn't see to guide a pen, it was Sirena who helped her to write her letters. Haviland Dumaresq could pardon for that even Sirena's name; no siren she, indeed, but a simple-hearted, kindly-natured, rough, self-satisfied, self-sufficing Western girl. Besides, was she not Cyrus Vanrenen's sister; and were not Haviland Dumaresq's ideas for the moment beginning vaguely to fix themselves upon Cyrus Vanrenen's future? Anything on earth, now, to turn the current of Psyche's mind into fresh directions!

'My darling grows no better, Miss Sirena,' he said pathetically, as he glanced at Psyche sitting with that settled resigned air of hers on the bench far below. 'I had hoped much from this trip to Africa. Every day I stop here my hopes grow slenderer. As the novelty palls, the evil increases. She's fading like a flower. I know not what next to try to rouse her.'

Sirena glanced back at him with tears in her eyes.

'Do you think she'll go blind, then, sir?' she asked anxiously.

'Unless we can change the set of her thoughts,' Dumaresq answered in a very slow voice, 'purely functional as the evil is, I begin to fear it. An effort would suffice to make her see as well as ever, to be sure; but she seems incapable even of making that effort. Her will-power's gone. She lacks initiative. She has nothing left to live for, I'm afraid, just now. I wish to God we could find something to interest her in life. At her age, such a want of living-power's simply unnatural.'

'That's so, sir,' Sirena answered, half-afraid, for she could never quite conquer her instinctive terror of the famous thinker.

'You know the cause?' Haviland Dumaresq suggested tentatively.

'I guess so, in part,' Sirena answered with what might (for an American girl) be almost called timidity. 'Miss Maitland's enabled me to draw my own conclusions.'

Haviland Dumaresq paused for a moment, irresolute. Then he went on dreamily, in his half-soliloquizing fashion:

'It would be a great thing, though, if we could make her take some living interest in something or somebody else, instead of leaving her to this perpetual brooding over her buried grief.'

'It would so,' Sirena assented eagerly.

Dumaresq started at the cordiality of this assent. Her tone, he felt sure, said more than her words. She had thought it over—thought it over before. Here, surely, was an ally—a ready-made ally. If only the current of Psyche's thought could be turned! It wasn't only for her happiness nowadays, alas! it was for her eyes, her sight, her health, her very life almost.

'Nothing will ever give her a chance now, I fear,' he said slowly, still fixing his gaze on Psyche in the distance, 'except the slow growth of a fresh affection. It would have to be slow—it would have to be long—it would have to be all begun from without, for Psyche herself, in her present frame of mind, would never begin it. She's lost the impetus. Her heart's too much bound up now

in that unknown grave. But if anybody should ever happen to fall in love with her, and to press his suit upon her by gentle degrees—she's young still—nature and instinct are all on her side—it isn't natural at her age to grieve for ever—well, I almost fancy he might have a chance—he might yet prevail upon her. And if, however slowly, Psyche could only be brought to feel that some new object in life was dawning on her horizon and growing up before her, her eyesight, I believe, would at last come back. All the doctors are agreed as to that: all she needs now is power to make the effort.'

Sirena looked up at him with a vague wistfulness.

'If Cyrus——' she began; then she broke off suddenly, appalled to herself at her own exceeding boldness.

Dumaresq interrupted her with a sudden return of his native haughtiness.

'Mr. Vanrenen,' he said, drawing himself up as if he had been stung, 'is a very young man for whom I have slowly conceived—well, a certain regard, in spite, I will confess, of some initial prejudice. But I most assuredly didn't intend, in what I have just said, to allude either to him or to any other particular person. If you thought I meant to do so, you entirely misunderstood me. It is an inherent, perhaps an ineradicable, vice of the feminine mind always to bring down general propositions to an individual instance.'

He said it in his grand impersonal, kingly manner, like a monarch in his own philosophic realm, dismissing for the moment the *pourparlers* of some friendly power on a matter affecting his daughter's interests. His condescension was so evident, indeed, that Sirena herself—unabashed, wild Western American that she was—felt constrained to answer humbly in her smallest voice:

'I beg your pardon, Mr. Dumaresq. I—I didn't know what I was going to venture to suggest would be likely to offend you.'

She was awed by the solemn dignity of the old man's attitude. In her own heart she felt tolerably sure he meant to hint, in his obscure way, that if Cyrus made love to Psyche, he, for his part, would have no serious obstacle of his own to offer. But she also felt that,

penniless and aged as the great philosopher was, a cipher in the worldly society of rank and wealth, he still considered and knew himself a power in the world—a power of a kind that could hardly bear to stoop to the vulgar trivialities of Cincinnati pork-merchants. And he made Sirena recognise his position too. That frank and fearless young daughter of an irreverent dollar-worshipping Western Republic yet recognised in her own heart, as she sat there that morning under the weeping pepper-tree, that the gray philosopher in the threadbare coat would be conferring an undoubted honour on her house if he were to admit, however grudgingly, and with whatever reserves, that Cyrus Vanrenen might conceivably pay his court unopposed to so great a lady as Haviland Dumaresq's daughter.

The old man rose, as if to conclude an interview that embarrassed him. Sirena rose too, and moved towards the court, where Psyche was sitting. At the self-same moment, Cyrus and Geraldine Maitland came in sight from the opposite direction.

Cyrus was in a humour particularly disposed to think and hear anything good of Haviland Dumaresq and his daughter; for in truth he had just been conferring a favour upon them. Geraldine had called on her weekly errand of paying the other half of Mrs. Holliday's bill, for which Cyrus unobtrusively supplied the money. To him it was nothing—less than nothing, for he was really one of the richest men in Cincinnati: if out of the superfluity of his wealth he could do anything to make Haviland Dumaresq or his daughter the happier, he was ready with all good-will to do it, not letting his left hand know what his right hand was doing. Americans are more public-spirited in the use of their money than we are; and Cyrus took to himself no special credit for this graceful act. Society and the world, he had been told, owed Haviland Dumaresq an immense debt: and part of that debt, by the favour of circumstances, he, Cyrus Vanrenen, was privileged to discharge for it. It was one of the many advantages of wealth that money could so bring him into pleasing personal relations, however one-sided, with his natural betters.

Psyche, looking up, was dimly conscious of somebody approaching. She moved aside a little, and made room for the young man on the bench. Cyrus noted the natural courtesy with keen pleasure. She wanted him to sit beside her, then! And she so very high-toned! Such a singular honour from Haviland Dumaresq's daughter!

They sat and watched out the set together, Psyche seeing nothing, and Cyrus talking gaily enough to her about nothing in particular. Yet she listened gracefully. The full-flowing murmur of his trivialities soothed her. Mr. Vanrenen was always so kind and nice: she liked him so much for his simple good-nature.

As they sat there talking idly, Corona brought out a letter with an American stamp on it. Cyrus tore open the envelope and read its contents with a faint puckering of his eyebrows.

'Business slack?' Corona inquired with obvious interest.

'Well, the old man writes the market's feverish,' Cyrus answered, with a faint flush of ingenuous shame. He had never felt ashamed of pork in his life before—in Cincinnati, pork is as fashionable as cotton in Manchester or cutlery in Sheffield—but in Psyche's presence he was vaguely aware of something ludicrously common-place about that Ohio staple. To hide his confusion he murmured once more—'East-bound freight-rates restored from Chicawgo.'

'Is that so?' Corona cried, with much meaning.

'That *is* so,' Cyrus replied; 'and, what's more, Futures in lard are described as nervous.'

'You don't tell!' Corona murmured sympathetically.

Like all Western girls, she was a born gambler. She had ventured her own little pile on Futures.

'Yes, I do,' her brother responded; 'and there's a Corner in December ribs and sides, too—a very dangerous Corner. January opened at 160, and, without once receding from that first figure, touched as high at times as 172. "The determination to carry the February squeeze through to the bitter end," Eselstein says in his letter, "makes operators apprehensive of what may occur with deferred deliveries." It's awkward—very.'

'And what'll Mr. Eselstein do?' Corona asked, drawing a deep breath.

'Why, I guess the old man 'll back the Fifth National Bank blind,' Cyrus answered, smiling. 'He's bound to go it, with such a squeeze as that! It's neck or nothing.'

To Psyche, all this was Greek indeed; Squeezes, and Futures, and Corners, and so forth, meant less than nothing. They were talking, to her, a foreign language. Yet she felt vaguely, for all that, that she was *de trop* just then. She rose, and tried to grope her way blindly to the house. Cyrus, rising at the same moment, led her up to her father at the door of the *pension*.

'Thank you,' she said, turning round to him with rising tears in her eyes.

She was really grateful for all these little kindnesses. Cyrus opened the door, and ushered her in with a bending head. He looked after her admiringly, as she felt her way with outstretched hands through the darkling passages. Poor little lady! He would do anything to serve her. She was Haviland Dumaresq's daughter—and so very high-toned!

On the steps Sirena met him with a hushed face.

'Cy,' she said, looking up at him, 'do you know what Mr. Dumaresq told me just now? He told me you were a young man for whom he'd conceived quite a regard! I assure you he said so. And I think, Cy,' she went on after a short pause, 'you ought to accept this intimation, and make the best of your position with Psyche.'

Cyrus pondered.

'What'd Geraldine Maitland think?' he said at last, thoughtfully.

Sirena rose to the situation like a born diplomat.

'Why, Geraldine Maitland said to me to-day,' she answered with deep wisdom. '"What a pity Psyche don't take a fancy to that dear fellow, your brother!" That's exactly how she said it. And my advice to you is, go in and try for her, Cy. It's something, you know, to be Haviland Dumaresq's son-in-law.'

'They'd stare some in Cincinnati,' Cyrus admitted, stroking his nascent moustache reflectively.

'And you like her, you know, Cy,' his sister continued, returning to the charge and following up her advantage. 'You must allow you like her. I can see every day you like her better.'

'Well,' Cyrus admitted in an apologetic voice, 'it don't seem natural I shouldn't like her, either—being thrown together with her so much, and she so high-toned. Her very misfortunes make a man somehow feel like loving her. If it weren't for Geraldine Maitland——'

'Geraldine Maitland!' Sirena cried scornfully, interrupting him with a contemptuous twirl of her graceful fingers. 'Well, Cy, I'd have thought even you'd have seen Geraldine Maitland don't sit on the same rail with Psyche, any way. And ever since Psyche came to the house, you've been getting to think more and more of Psyche, and less and less of Geraldine Maitland.'

'That's so, too,' Cyrus assented unreservedly, after a moment's thought. 'That's good psychology, as Mr. Dumaresq would say. It's no use crying for the moon, you see, Reeney. So I don't deny, one scale's been going up, and the other down, ever since Miss Dumaresq came here.'

'Very well, then,' Sirena said, with an imperious air. 'Let 'em balance straight, and go ahead, Cyrus. Just you catch on to Psyche, now you've got the chance, and don't go crying over spilt milk any more with Geraldine Maitland.'

Her advice seemed wise. So for the next three months, accordingly, Cyrus Vanrenen was Psyche Dumaresq's most devoted slave. The simple-hearted, generous, whole-souled young American, having once taken her up, fell easily in love with her, if, indeed, he hadn't been more than half in love with her already. He had really persuaded himself now—so blind is youth—that if Psyche could only love him in return, her eyesight would soon come all right again, as the doctors assured them. And for the next three months, with this object in view, he waited upon her as assiduously as her own shadow. As for Psyche, she, poor child! accepted his gentle squiring, all unconscious of its aim, yet not without gratitude. A hand to guide her was a comfort in these dark days; for Psyche herself never doubted now the terrible truth that the end of it all must be total blindness.

Yet when Sirena told Geraldine Maitland the result of

her little plot upon Cyrus's heart—a plot already concocted between them in strict confidence—Geraldine's face, to her surprise, fell somewhat. She stifled a sigh, like a woman that she was (and therefore illogical), as if it hardly pleased her to hear that the lover she had taken such pains to shuffle off could give her up in favour of Psyche quite so readily.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A VISION OF THE NIGHT.

ALL is not lost even when things look blackest on the surface. About those same days—while Psyche was mourning her lost love in Algeria—away to the south of the African desert, a belated caravan was struggling along on its way northward, bringing with it two weary and footsore Englishmen, refugees from Gordon's conquered force at Khartoum. Both of them were clad from head to foot with scrupulous nicety in Arab costume, and both were to the outer eye of Islam devout Mohammedans of the purest orthodoxy.

After the final assault of the 26th of January, when those two stray Englishmen had been wounded and left for dead among the slaughtered in the great square, their bodies were taken up by the Mahdi's people, and carried some time later into the rough hospital which Gordon had built, with the rest of the sufferers. There they revived against all hope. One of them, a tall dark man with a somewhat sad Oriental face, spoke Arabic with the perfect fluency of a native; by his aid, the other, of more European-looking and whiter type, had been recognised by the Mahdi's troops as a good Moslem in the Egyptian service, and spared accordingly from the doom of slavery which was the universal fate of the remaining handful of Europeans left alive in conquered Khartoum.

After a month or two of convalescence in the captured city, the two refugees had started with a caravan going westward toward Darfur and the Central Soudan. Considine was right: his companions had escaped with their lives indeed from that carmagnole of slaughter. But to

get away to Europe was a very different and much more difficult matter. Linnell knew, indeed, how impossible it would have been to force his road northward by the direct route to Dongola and Cairo, or even to seek the Red Sea coast at uncertain Suakin. To do either would be to proclaim themselves at once as Christians, or at least well-wishers to the Egyptian cause. Their sole chance of escape lay, therefore, in accepting both Islam and the Mahdi with perfect resignation, and trying to retreat upon the further interior, where the Khalifa reigned supreme, rather than in attempting to open communications northward with Egypt and the infidel.

The painter's plan, accordingly, was to cross the desert by Ideles and Ouargla, and to come out with the caravans that abut at last on the Mediterranean in Algerian territory.

It was a bold design. The notion was indeed both a difficult and a dangerous one. In order to accomplish it, they had to pass through the midst of a fanatical population, lately excited to the highest pitch of religious frenzy by the Mahdi's revolt, and ready to kill at a moment's notice, without trial or appeal, any man even suspected of being not merely a Christian, but even an orthodox anti-Mahdist Mussulman. The slightest departure from the intricate rules of Moslem ceremonial, the faintest indication of ignorance or unfamiliarity as to the endless details of Moslem ritual, the tiniest slip in speech or manners, would have entailed upon them both instant destruction.

Linnell, however, was an old hand at the devices and shifts of Oriental travel: he taught his companion all he knew himself: and by sedulously giving out that they were Asiatic Mussulmans, retiring from Khartoum after having lost their all during the protracted siege, he succeeded in drawing off suspicion from his too dangerous neighbour, who had thus no need to communicate directly with the Arabs at all. To the other members of the various caravans they joined on their way—for they shifted often of set purpose—they were merely Mohammed Ali of Sind, and Seyyid Ben Marabet of Upper India. Mohammed Ali could speak Arabic well; the

Seyyid, as was natural, though skilled in the Koran, knew no language at all save his own local Urdu tongue.

On such terms the fugitives had managed to make their way by long, slow stages as far as Tintellust, whence they were endeavouring now to cross the main desert by the accustomed track to Ideles and Ouargla.

Ghastly as all their experiences of Eastern travel had been, this particular march was the ghastliest and most dangerous of any. Suspicion closed in upon them, they knew not why. The nearer they came to Christian rule the more did their companions appear to distrust them. On one particular night, during that terrible march, the camels had all been arranged for the evening, the Arabs were all resting in their places in the tents, and the two Europeans in a remote corner sat chatting together wearily and in doubt about their further progress.

'Austen,' Linnell began, in a very commonplace and natural tone, dissembling his feelings, 'don't look at me as if I were saying anything the least out of the way, and don't speak as if you were at all alarmed or suspicious; but there's danger ahead. Things are coming to a crisis. I've been expecting it daily for some time past, and now I'm sure it's actually upon us. You made one or two mistakes in the mid-day prayers, I observed, to-day: omitted to turn to Mecca after the last clause of the Litany of the Faithful—and the Sheikh, I'm sure, suspects you of being a Christian.'

'You don't really think so?' Sir Austen answered, making his tone seem as simple and unconcerned as possible, in spite of the alarm this announcement inspired, for fear the Arabs should notice they were talking secrets together.

'Yes, I do,' Linnell replied, as jauntily as before. 'The position's critical: extremely critical. We must be very cautious how we proceed in future. A word, a look, a movement may lose us all. There's another caravan gone on, you know, towards Ideles yesterday. If only we could slink away safely to that one, where we're not known, we might avoid any further suspicion for the present. But here we shall be watched with a thousand eyes, and the tiniest new error will seal our death-warrant.'

Sir Austen pretended to look idly around.

'What do you propose to do, then?' he asked with a careless expression. 'Do you think it would be possible for us to give them the slip, and steal clear away to the party in front of us?'

'If it's done at all,' Linnell answered promptly, pretending to be deeply engaged in discussing the arrangement of his native boots, which he turned over and inspected with minute care, 'it must be done this very night, not a moment later: delay would be fatal. Just look at this hole here. Could I sew it up, do you think? Ah, yes, I thought so. The fastest camels have done comparatively little for their powers to-day. If we took them out by three in the morning they'd be fresh enough for our purpose, and we might get such a start that the caravan people could never overtake us with their lumbering beasts; and we could easily make the others believe we'd been forced to fly from robber Bedouins.'

'Shall we risk it?' Sir Austen asked, turning over the boot, and pretending to be engaged in discussing the ways and means of mending it.

'We will,' Linnell answered. 'It's agreed, then. Good. At three o'clock. We've had many close shaves of our lives together, Austen, and I'm almost beginning to get tired of them now; but for one person's sake I'll have a try once more. I want, if I can, to get back with a whole skin to England.'

Sir Austen gathered up his burnous and examined the hem.

'Charlie,' he said penitently, 'this is all my fault. Why trouble yourself with me? There'd be no danger for you if I were left behind. Go on yourself alone, and leave me, if you will, to their tender mercies.'

'No, no,' Linnell answered, hardly repressing his natural horror at such a proposition. 'We've risked it together so many months now, and we'll risk it to the end, come what may of it.'

He spoke as carelessly and as lightly as he could; but his voice even so had a tinge of solemnity that roused the Sheikh's unfavourable attention.

'Mohammed Ali,' he cried, gazing over at him curiously

from under his eyebrows, 'what are you talking about with your countryman so much? The servants of the Prophet should rest in peace. It is not well that a noise should be made in the tents at nightfall.'

'I will rest, Sheikh, in Allah's name,' Linnell made answer piously, with an appropriate gesture. 'Not another word, Austen,' he added warningly. 'He's very suspicious.'

'Mohammed Ali,' the Sheikh said again, glaring most ominously at both the men, 'come away from your countryman and sit by my side. Let Seyyid Ben Marabet take his place at the far end in the corner by the baggage.'

Linnell knew better than to demur to this order. He rose at once, with a most submissive air, as becomes a Moslem, and took up his place where the Sheikh beckoned him. Sir Austen also stood up instinctively, and moved to the spot that Linnell's hand pointed out in silence. In such a case, implicit obedience was their only chance of avoiding immediate murder.

Reduced for the moment to absolute quiet, Linnell curled himself up in his thick burnous and tried his best to snatch a little sleep, but found he could not. The terrors and dangers of their situation weighed too heavily on his mind to admit of rest. He waited anxiously for three o'clock to come. He did not even turn where he lay, for fear of arousing fresh distrust. He held himself in a cramped position for hours at a stretch, rather than wake the Sheikh or the Arabs from their snoring slumber.

Sir Austen was more fortunate. Wrapped up in his rugs, he dozed off for awhile in the corner where he lay, and refreshed himself against the toil they must necessarily endure before morning. But even he could hardly sleep for excitement and suspicion. His rest was very broken indeed. He turned and tossed with occasional low groans. About half-past two his head moved violently. Some strange and horrible vision was sweeping before his eyes, Linnell felt certain.

And so in truth it was. A strange and very unnatural nightmare. Sir Austen, as he lay on the bare ground, curled up in his burnous, and grasping his pistol, was

dreaming a dream so terrible in its way that it might well have made Linnell's blood run cold within him had he only known it.

A ghastly dream—cruel, wicked, horrible! On the sand of the desert, in the early dawn, Sir Austen seemed to his disordered fancy—what will not sleep suggest?—to be leaning over a body—a lifeless body—he knew not whose, or how it came there. A great silence brooded over the scene: a red-hot sun: a brown, hot desert: and full in its midst that mysterious body! It was a bleeding body, bleeding from the head. He looked at it close. Wounded: ah, wounded—a great round wound on the right temple. Shot; but by whom? Sir Austen, turning and groaning, knew not.

His dream passed. He slept. Then he dreamt again. The same dream as ever. An awful mystery seemed to surround that body. Sir Austen, gasping in his sleep for breath, was dimly conscious of some terrible remorse, some awful link that seemed to bind his own soul to that murdered corpse. Ah heaven, what link? Whose it was, or why he had shot it, he had no idea. Face and form suggested nothing to him. All was vague and blank and terrible. But an appalling consciousness of guilt and crime seemed to swamp his senses. He knew only in some dim, half-uncertain way that the man was dead—and that he himself felt like a murderer.

He turned restlessly once more upon his outstretched rug. With the turn came a change. The light of the oil-lamp was flickering on his eyes. It brought a new chapter in his uncertain vision. His dream melted away to an English lawn. His wife was there—that dear young wife of his—and she read him a letter: an important letter. It was a lawyer's letter about some inherited wealth. He hardly understood at first what it was all about; but in some dim fashion he fancied to himself he had come unexpectedly into a great property. Something about a lawsuit with somebody who claimed to inherit the estate, 'Pooh, pooh,' he heard his lawyer say idly in his dream; 'the girl hasn't got a leg to stand upon.'

He dozed for awhile in a quieter fashion. Then he

found himself once more crawling on all-fours on the desert sand. The corpse was there, whiter and more horrible to behold than ever. It lay on its face, weltering in blood. A hideous curiosity possessed his soul. He *must* find out whose body it was. He turned it over and gazed on its features. Oh, horror, he could hardly believe his eyes! It was Charles Linnell who lay dead and stiff before him!

Then a hideous truth flashed over him like lightning. Murdered! And by him! For his money, his money!

With a start and a cry, Sir Austen awoke. He sat up in his horror and gazed wildly around. Thank heaven —thank heaven, it was all a dream! He wasn't a criminal! He wasn't a murderer! There stood Charles Linnell, gazing at him reproachfully, not dead, but alive, one finger on his lip, and one on the watch he held out before him. Sir Austen, remembering where he was and how, took it all in at a rapid glance. It was the stroke of three—and his terror-stricken cry had almost roused the slumbering Arabs. In a second he was awake and all himself again.

Noiselessly and silently they crept from the tent, and stole unperceived into the open desert. Sir Austen's heart beat hard even yet with the horror and awe of that strange awakening; but he stilled it with an effort and stole on by his cousin. They cleared the tents, and reached the camels' tether. Thank heaven, thank heaven! it was all a vision.

Yet what awful suggestion of Satan was this that had come to him all unconscious in his dreaming moments? If Charles Linnell were even now to die—— He shuddered to think he could even dream it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

UNEXPECTED.

A WEEK or two later, Cyrus Vanrenen sat one brilliant Algerian morning under the shade of the drooping pepper-tree at the Orangers, discussing with his sister Corona the pros and cons of a serious move he contemplated in the

game of life. To the Western American mind, indeed, few things on earth are really serious; but this was one of them. Not, to be sure, that the question of getting married, or of who you chose for your accessory in the fact, could be regarded as in itself a particularly grave one; but when the person contemplated was so very high-toned as Psyche Dumaresq—well, Cyrus felt that to propose outright demanded some unwonted previous deliberation. So he discussed it long and he discussed it earnestly.

'I guess, Corona,' he said decisively at last, 'I'll plunge on it to-day. You must plunge once. After all, at the worst she can only say *no* to me. Come to think of it, that's one of the shortest words in the English language.'

'The question is, though,' Corona answered, very demure, 'if you waited a little longer mightn't she feel a bit more like making a *yes* of it?'

'Well, I don't know for that,' Cyrus answered after a moment's reflection, with philosophic calm. 'A man never knows what he can do till he tries. I've bossed a pork-ring, so I don't see why I need shrink into my shoes before a woman, anyhow. I may be presumptuous—she's so particularly high-toned—but I somehow feel as if she kind of liked me.'

'That sort of girl don't marry a man because she kind of likes him,' Corona answered with prompt decision. 'She marries only when she loves him like—like anything, Cyrus. But there ain't much harm in trying, any way. It *would* be a pretty good thing for the family, say, if we could feel you were marrying Haviland Dumaresq's daughter.'

'It would,' her brother repeated with emphasis. 'Folks would admire at it in Cincinnati.'

So Cyrus made up his mind for the plunge, and only waited for the fitting opportunity.

Now, opportunity, as is well known, comes in time to him who seeks it. It came to Cyrus soon after lunch, when Psyche, groping her way into the garden, sat down by herself on the stone seat in a far corner. She sat and gazed at the deep blue sky she could not see, and listened

to the hum of the invisible bees murmuring among the fruit-trees. The low buzz of insects was dear to her now. Sound had come to replace sight. A certain quiet calm possessed her soul. It was the resignation of despair stealing graciously over her. Presently Cyrus strolled up as if by accident, and sat down quietly on the bench beside her. Psyche made room for him gladly. The good young American was so kind and nice, so thoughtful and attentive, she really liked him. He began to talk to her, as he seated himself by her side in an unconcerned way, as if he meant nothing—merely everyday talk of a gossipy sort about the people in the *pension*.

'You like Sirena,' he said at last, in a very pleased voice, in answer to something Psyche had remarked. 'And Corona too. I'm sure you like them. It's a very great pleasure to me to find you like Sirena.'

'I love them both dearly,' Psyche answered with warmth. 'Except Geraldine Maitland, I think, Mr. Vanrenen, I never met anybody I liked so much. In a *pension* like this, one gets to know and understand people's characters so thoroughly, you see. Everywhere else you choose your intimates; here you have companionship thrust upon you, willy-nilly. And it seems to me, the more you know the nice people, the nicer they become; and the more you know the unpleasant ones, the more do their disagreeable traits grow upon you.'

'That's so,' Cyrus assented with a pleased smile. 'And our girls outlive the test pretty well, you think, Miss Dumaresq?'

'They need no test,' Psyche answered warmly. 'They're just charming. Sirena's a dear, and I loved her almost from the very first moment I ever saw her. I think that's generally the way with me. I suppose my instincts are quick, or something of that sort; but whoever I like, I like instinctively; and whoever I don't like, I don't like from the very beginning.'

Cyrus leaned forward with an eager bend.

'And which did you do with *me*, Miss Dumaresq?' he asked anxiously.

Psyche started.

'Why, Mr. Vanrenen,' she said with transparent frank-

ness, 'how on earth could anybody do anything but like you? I don't think it's possible to talk to you once without liking you ever so much. You're so good and true. I should think everybody always liked you.'

Cyrus's heart was in the seventh heaven.

'Thank you, Miss Dumaresq,' he said in a rather low and gentle voice. 'That means a great deal to me, I can tell you: a great deal more than you imagine, I'm certain. Indeed, there's something I want to say to you about that. Ever since you came here——'

He broke off short, for Psyche, anticipating what he was going to say, had risen from her seat with a little startled cry, and was groping her way back toward the *pension* in dismay. Cyrus's tone had told her all. It was dreadful, dreadful. This was something for which she was wholly unprepared. In her deep, deep sorrow, to have *this* thrust upon her! And by anyone so kind and good as Cyrus! It grieved her to the quick that he should have blundered into so sad and hopeless a mistake. The Vanrenens' friendship had been very pleasant to her—the one bright spot in her desert of trouble: and now this painful and unexpected contretemps would spoil all; she could never feel again as she had hitherto felt towards them. She groped her way on, and made blindly for the door. Cyrus, all abashed, but watchful and kindly still, walked by her side, and guided her movements almost imperceptibly.

As she reached the door, she turned round to him, crimson, but very gently. 'Thank you, Mr. Vanrenen,' she said in her soft sweet voice. 'I'm so much obliged to you for your silence and your help. You saw how I felt. That was more than kind of you.'

'And I mayn't say more?' Cyrus asked, half trembling.

'Not at present,' Psyche answered, hardly knowing what she said. 'You—you took me so much by surprise, you know. I wasn't expecting it. Some day, perhaps, I'll tell—Sirena or Corona everything I feel. But not now. I can't bear it yet. Please go, Mr. Vanrenen There's Geraldine come to have her set at tennis with you.'

Cyrus, obedient as always, raised his hat, though he

sorely wondered what Psyche meant. But these high-toned women are always so hard to understand. They don't say what they mean right out: they talk round and round things. Their feelings are more than a fellow can fathom. But you've got to accept them. You must take them on their own terms or give the pursuit up altogether. They won't be anything except themselves. So he turned on his heel, and, descending to the tennis-court, took his seat quietly beside Geraldine Maitland.

As for poor Psyche, much moved and disturbed by this untoward event, she took refuge for awhile, of set purpose, in the little salon; for if she had gone to her own room, she must have burst into tears and cried her eyes out. Her father was there, reading a book on the sofa; and Corona, too; she could just make out a vague blur for Corona. So she glided in, and sank into a seat. Haviland Dumaresq glanced up from his book as she entered and smiled approbation. She had made her way to her seat without much difficulty, and now she was gazing, by no means vacantly, around the room. He was sure by the intelligent look in her eyes that Psyche was really taking in and observing the various objects.

And so, in the excitement of the moment, she really was. To conceal her agitation, to hide her misery, she was looking about her with all her eyes at the things in the room. And what was more, she saw them—she saw them.

A newspaper lay on the centre table of the salon. Psyche could make it out quite distinctly as a dim white patch from the place where she sat on the low divan between the two arcaded Moorish windows. Partly to please Haviland Dumaresq, partly to hide her pain and distress, she made up her mind to try and read it. Her father was always urging her to read, and so was the doctor, and Sirena too, and Corona, and everybody. If only she would rouse herself, they said—one effort of will—all might yet begin to re-establish itself. Well, then, she would: she would do it to please them. With that firmness of purpose which ran in the very blood with her, an inheritance of character from Haviland Dumaresq, Psyche determined that, swim and dance as it might, she *would* make it out—she *would* read it. She would show them

all she could at least try hard: she would not be beaten by mere dead circumstance without at any rate one more stern struggle.

After a moment's pause, she rose from her seat again and groped her way across the room firmly. Corona saw her, and, rising in concert, glided across to take her arm and lead her to the table. But Psyche waved the friendly aid aside with an imperious gesture. She wanted to do it all by herself. She stumbled across the vacant space to the table with doubtful feet, and took up the dim white patch in her trembling fingers. Her father watched her furtively above the top of his book. Looking hard at the title, and concentrating her gaze, she saw to her surprise that she could still make out the big print letters. It was the *Dépêches Algériennes*, and it was dated *Jeudi*, 26 *Février*. Pleased at her success, she turned back to the window, and seated herself once more on the low divan, where she tried to spell out the matter of the telegrams.

As she gazed at them vacantly, a word in the second column caught her eye on a sudden—a word that no longer swam or danced, but stared at her straight and hard in fast black letters—a word that she could have seen, she felt, if she were stone-blind—a word that burned itself then and there into her very brain.

A single English name!

The name Linnell, as clear as daylight.

She almost cried aloud with horror and surprise—horror, and a certain vague, indefinite fascination.

She knew he was dead: it was the certainty of his death the paper announced. Some straggler from the Soudan must have brought to Algiers the terrible tidings. Better the certainty than suspense any longer.

For to Psyche there was but one Linnell in the whole wide world. What to her were baronets or parsons or British officers? The name must needs be his and nobody else's.

With a terrible effort, she restrained herself from calling out, she restrained herself from fainting. Cold as death, she concentrated her glance once more upon the paper.

Science was right. It needed but a strong exercise of

will. As she focussed her eyes upon the dim white sheet, letter after letter came out distinctly, in blood-red tints, till she could make out the key-words of the sentence easily: they glared at her from the page like liquid fire. They were: 'Biskra'—'Linnell'—'Khartoum'—'Gordon.'

She bit her lip till the blood came almost, and dug the nails of her clenched left hand deep into the palm to increase the stimulus. She was striving hard enough now in all conscience. Her father and the doctors could find no fault with her.

Slowly, slowly, those critical words blazed out more distinctly and plainer still. Line after line gradually arranged itself. The colours only seemed all gone wrong. They glowed so fiercely, like molten gold, she could hardly look at them. But she looked for all that—she looked and shuddered. And this was what she read, in telegraphic French, written as it seemed to her in crimson letters, on a burning ground of fiery orange:

'*Biskra, Feb.* 24.—Arabs from the oases announce to-day that a caravan now crossing the desert convoys a survivor of Gordon's army at Khartoum, cut off by the Mahdi in the course of last winter. From the description given, it would appear that the fugitive is probably an Englishman, whose name the Arabs assert to be Sir Linnell. In effect an officer of that name is known to have been missing after the fall of Khartoum. The caravan is expected to reach Biskra some time about the 6th proximo.'

Psyche's strength held out till she had finished the telegram. Then she fell back on her seat and swooned away suddenly.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

ONE HOPE IS TOO LIKE DESPAIR.

When Psyche opened her eyes again, she was lying on her own bed in the little blue-and-green Moorish room, and she knew by the sound of whispered voices that her father and Sirena were leaning tenderly over her. But

all around was dark as pitch now: not a ray of light, not a tremor of sense, reached at last those great dim eyes of hers.

'I know, my darling,' Haviland Dumaresq said, with a stifled groan, as she looked up appealingly in the direction of the place whence she heard his voice come towards her. 'I took it up and read it. I understand all. But, my darling, my darling, your sight's come back: you saw it! you read it!'

'It's the last thing I shall ever see on earth,' Psyche answered solemnly—'if it isn't He. My eyes are gone now. I can make out nothing. Not a sparkle of light. I'm in black darkness.'

It was the first time father or daughter had ever openly alluded to Linnell's existence since the day of that terrible awakening at Petherton. Haviland Dumaresq made no overt answer, but he leant over her with hot tears dropping from his eyes unchecked upon her face, and held her cold white hand intertwined in his with a fatherly pressure.

'Is it He or the other one?' Psyche cried again, unable to hold her suspense and anxiety locked up any longer in her own bosom. 'How can we find out? Oh, how can we find out? Father, do you think it's He or the other one?'

At that piteous cry, Haviland Dumaresq felt his own heart sink horribly within him. 'My darling,' he said, with a fearful shrinking reluctance, 'I can't bear to buoy you up with a false hope: if the paper says anything, it says Sir Austen: "an officer of that name is known to have been missing from Gordon's force after the fall of Khartoum."'

'Yes, yes,' Psyche cried, sitting up on the bed, and groping with her hand for Sirena to support her. 'But that's conjecture—that's pure conjecture.' Love had taught her logic of its own accord. 'The newspaper knows no more than we do. They can't tell whether it's he or not. The one thing they know is that his name is —*that:* the French put Sir so often for Mr.'

'Perhaps,' her father answered slowly and sadly, unwilling to quench the smoking flax of Psyche's despon-

dency; 'but we can't tell. We can never guess it. We must wait and see. He'll soon be at Biskra. Only, darling, don't let yourself hope too easily, I implore you.'

Psyche rose, and stood up on the floor. Her face was very white and resolute. No staggering or indecision now. She groped her way like a blind woman to the wardrobe in the corner, and took out her jacket and hat by feeling for them.

'Where are you going, my child?' her father asked in blank surprise.

'To Biskra,' Psyche answered, gazing back at him intently from her sightless orbs. 'To Biskra—to look for him.'

'My darling, my darling, it's quite impossible!'

'Papa,' Psyche said, groping blindly towards the door, 'I *must* go. I feel I've got to. I can't wait here for all those days in this terror and uncertainty.'

Sirena seized her two hands in hers. 'Psyche,' she cried, with tears falling fast, 'you can't go. You're not half strong enough. It'd kill you to travel all the way to the desert, as weak as you are now. But you shan't wait one minute longer than necessary, if *we* can help it, in this state of suspense. Cyrus and I will go to Biskra right away, and wire news to you, who it is, at the earliest opportunity.'

Psyche shook her head with infinite sadness. 'That won't do,' she murmured. 'I can't stop still. I must do something. I want to be moving. I want to be in action, or else I shall die. And besides, if it's really and truly He, I want to be there on the spot to welcome him.'

Her eyes as she spoke were dry and tearless. The contrast between her words and her impassive face was terrible to behold. Sirena forced her gently back into an easy-chair. 'Cry! darling,' she exclaimed imploringly. 'Cry, cry, and that'll relieve you! I wanted to have you for my very own sister; but now I'd most give my very life up, if only I could make it be that other man come to take you away from Cyrus. He and I'll go to Biskra right away to find him, and never rest till we've news to tell you.'

As she spoke, with a sudden burst of emotion, the relief of tears came to Psyche. Sirena's sympathy had broken the spell. Her hand had opened the sealed fountain. The poor child flung herself back in the easy-chair and sobbed and moaned like one whose heart is broken. Hoping against hope, she could hardly believe it was really Linnell. She couldn't wait: she couldn't wait. The long delay would almost kill her. And disappointment at its end would kill her inevitably.

They reasoned with her long, but she wouldn't listen. It was impossible in such a state as hers to go: the journey was long: her nerves were shattered. But Psyche, a Dumaresq born that she was, remained like adamant. To one thing alone she returned at each assault. She must and would go to Biskra.

At last Haviland Dumaresq, beside himself with remorse, almost gave way. Her earnestness was so great that he dared not refuse her. He consented against his better judgment: 'You may go, then, Psyche.' At that, Psyche rose once more from her chair. As she did so, she staggered and almost fell. She had used up her small remaining strength in the argument. A great horror seemed to come over her all at once. 'I can't,' she cried, flinging her arms up in a passion of despair. 'I'm too weak, too feeble. I can't even stand. Lay me on the bed—papa—Sirena!'

They lifted her up and laid her on the bed. There she lay long, sobbing low and quietly. It was a relief to her even to be able to sob. After a great pause, she felt about with her pale white fingers for her father's hand. 'Papa,' she murmured once more, 'do you believe in presentiments?'

'Me, my child!' Haviland Dumaresq answered with a start. 'No, no, decidedly. No thought or feeling of any human being is worth anything at all as a matter of evidence, except it be the outcome of direct intimation received by the ordinary channels of sense in touch, or sight, or smell, or hearing.'

'Papa,' Psyche went on, with unnatural calmness, never heeding his disclaimer, 'I think, in certain states of mind, one sees and feels internally somehow. I have

a presentiment that it isn't Him. It's the other man, the cousin. And He's really dead. As I tried to rise from my chair that moment, a flash came over me. I had a strange sense that I saw him lying dead on the sand—alone and bleeding—away in the desert.'

She said it so solemnly, in the full force of some strange internal conviction pressing itself upon her, as such convictions will at certain times, that for a few seconds nobody spoke. They were overawed by the profound and unearthly certainty of her calm tone. Her sightless eyes were straining into space. She seemed like one who can penetrate the secrets of space to the remotest distance.

But Haviland Dumaresq, philosopher to the core, knew it was all mere baseless illusion.

After awhile she turned her white face towards them again.

'I feel he was murdered,' she said with solemn persistence—'murdered in the sands—by some other white man. Somebody who escaped with him away from Khartoum. Some cruel traitor who killed him, perhaps, to save himself. I see it somehow, clearly, in my own mind. It's borne in upon me now. I can read it like a picture.'

'My child,' her father cried, wringing his hands in his misery, 'don't trust these pictures. They're fancy, fancy. Your brain's overwrought, and it leads you astray. We'll send to Biskra—we'll send and find out all about him.'

'I'll go myself,' Sirena said, with a choking voice, swallowing down her sobs. 'I'll go and speak to Cyrus this very minute. We'll set out from Algiers by the first train to-morrow.'

Psyche rose up on the bed where she lay, and clutched her arm hard. 'Not you,' she cried, 'Sirena; I can't do without you. Send Corona and Mr. Vanrenen, if you will; but *you* must stop. I can't let you go; you're so very dear to me. I want you—I want you.'

Sirena stooped down and kissed her white forehead.

'Thank you, my darling,' she said, profoundly touched. 'If you want me to stop on that account, why, Psyche, I'd give up even the pleasure of going to Biskra to serve

you; though if they *do* find him, I shall just envy them.'

'They won't find him,' Psyche answered, with the same unnatural quiet as before in her tone.

It frightened Sirena to hear her so calm. She feared such restraint must mean serious mischief in the long-run.

'But if they do,' she said, 'they'll be able to tell him all about you, and that'll be so delightful. I just envy them.'

'If they do,' Psyche cried, with something like the old shrinking reserve coming over her with a rush, 'they mustn't tell him anything, not even that I'm here at all. If he's alive, how do I know he even remembers me? All I want is to know he isn't dead. To me he was, oh! so much, so much. But to him, perhaps, I was never really anything.'

She turned and moaned inarticulately on the bed. Shame and despair divided her soul. Then she felt once more for Sirena's hand.

'And if they don't,' she cried, grasping it convulsively, 'I shall want you here; I shall want you to help me bear the news; I shall want you to hold my head while I die; I shall want you to give me a last, last kiss, next to yours, father.'

The American girl stood and held her own bosom tight to keep it from bursting. Neither of them could answer her a single word. They felt what she said was only too true. They knew in their hearts evil news must kill her.

Sirena tried to disengage her hand.

'Where are you going?' Psyche asked, with quick perception of her intended movement.

'To tell Cyrus,' her friend sobbed back.

'Not yet—not yet. Wait with me a little. Do you think he'll go? Do you think he'll do it for me?'

'Why, we'd any of us go the ends of the earth or cut off our right hands to serve you, dear,' Sirena answered, bursting afresh into tears. 'We feel it's an honour, Psyche, to do anything for you, any way.'

CHAPTER XXXVII.

FROM CINCINNATI.

MEANWHILE, Cyrus and Geraldine Maitland were sitting out with half a dozen others around the tennis-court in the valley, all unconscious of the tragedy that was taking place within, so close to where they sat, in Psyche's bedroom. They had played a set on the ground themselves, and fearing to monopolize the court too long, were now looking on and criticising their four successors, or indulging in the cheap recreation, so popular at health-resorts, of grumbling freely at all their friends and acquaintances. Presently the talk turned, as it was apt to do, upon poor Psyche and her chances of recovery.

'Do you think she'll ever get well?' Geraldine asked anxiously, for the fiftieth time during the last fortnight.

'Oh, she's all right,' Cyrus answered off-hand, with the easy and unthinking optimism of his countrymen. 'Give her time, and she'll come round right so: in my opinion, it's quite a circumstance. I presume she'll worry over it for a month or two more—women do feel bad about such things, I know—but then she'll get better. In our country we see a lot of these nervous women, and we don't trouble much about 'em, even when they're high-toned. They often seem real sick for a time; but they hang on to life in the long-run, by the skin of their teeth, more than the most of folks.'

'I wonder if *she* will,' Geraldine sighed reflectively. 'I hardly believe it. It makes me awfully depressed at times to see her so miserable. Do you know, Mr. Vanrenen, I'd do a great deal, if only I could, to help her.'

'Why, so'd I, you bet,' Cyrus responded, open-eyed, with naïf surprise that anybody should think such a truism worth uttering. 'I'd be real pleased, you may put your money on it, if I could do anything to be any sort of use to her. But drug stores ain't much good for a case like hers. Time's the only Sequah's Soothing Syrup that'll suit her malady. And I guess it'll bring her round all right in the end. You see, she's one of

these high-toned girls that take things to heart a good deal just at first more than most other folks.'

'I don't believe anything 'll ever do *her* any good, unless that Mr. Linnell of hers were to turn up again,' Geraldine answered suddenly. 'She never thinks of anything else, I'm sure. She fancies she sent him off to his death; and it preys upon her spirits, and she won't be comforted.'

'Do you think he ever *will* turn up?' Cyrus asked, describing a circle on the ground with his light cane. 'I don't. Sirena told me all about it that day when we came along up from the city with Miss Dumaresq. She told me all you said to her on the subject. And I wouldn't like to lay ten dollars myself on the gentleman's life. They were all cut off, you know—or almost all—by the Mah li's niggers.'

'I can't make my mind up,' Geraldine replied slowly, looking down at the path. 'Sometimes I think there's a chance of it still—you see, he knew Arabic so awfully well—and sometimes I think the wish alone was father to the thought, Mr. Vanrenen. But I hope even now; and so I'm pretty sure does Psyche.'

But poor Psyche was that very moment absorbed in her own room by that despairing vision of Linnell lying dead in a pool of his blood on the sands of the desert.

'If he does,' Cyrus remarked with a quiet sigh, 'it'll be pretty awkward for me, that's just about all. I'd better go back, right away, to Amurrica.'

'Are you so *very* much in love with her?' Geraldine asked, with a frankness equalling his own—'that you must go back to *Amurrica* if she won't have you?'

'I guess so,' the young Westerner answered without a moment's hesitation. 'I always do like these high-toned English girls, you know, Miss Maitland. I liked you first, because you were so high-toned; I was death on *you*, as long as I thought I'd got a ghost of a chance; and when you wouldn't as much as look at me, and I saw it was no use fooling around any longer—why, by Sirena's advice, I caught on elsewhere, and transferred my affections, intact, to Miss Dumaresq. She's a girl any man might be real proud to marry, that one. And then, you see, her father's quite a prominent author.'

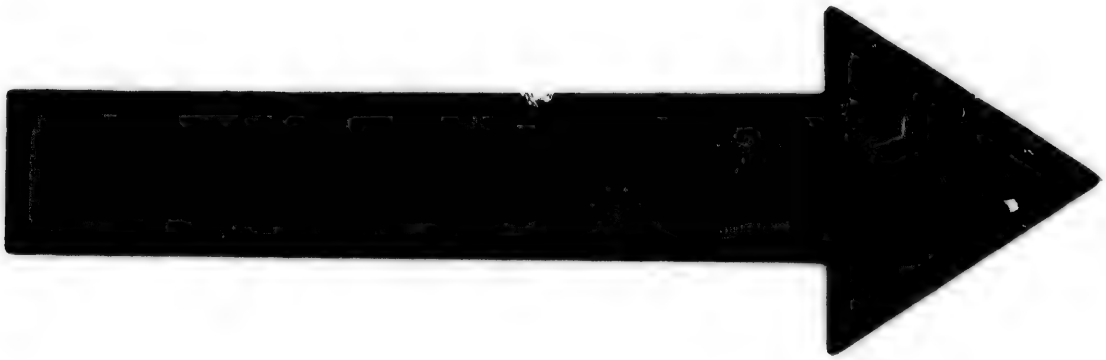
'Well, which did you like best?' Geraldine asked with a dash, turning round upon him so quickly with that strange question that he almost jumped away from her. Could she be piqued at his 'transferring' his affections, he wondered.

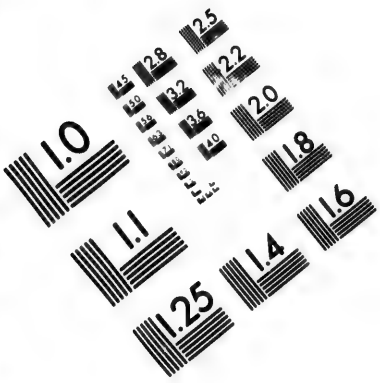
'Why,' he answered deliberately, after a moment's pause, for he was a truthful and honest, if somewhat inept young man, 'that's not a question I feel prepared to meet in either direction right away, Miss Maitland. I don't seem to hook on to it as quick as I might. It kind of beats me. One ways, I don't believe in a man crying for the moon; but then, if I was offered the moon at a gift, and no mistake, I might perhaps be inclined to reopen the subject. However, what I say now is, without any comparisons (which are always odious, the copy-book tells us), she's a fine high-toned girl, this Miss Dumaresq, and I do admire at her.'

As they spoke, a little French telegraph boy appeared at the gate, and was walking up to the house in a leisurely way, with a blue scrap of the well-known flimsy official paper carelessly dangled between his thumb and finger. Cyrus looked up and beckoned the lad to come over. 'It's a cablegram for me, I guess,' he said with languid interest. 'Things in Cincinnati ain't been going as smooth as papier-maché wheels on steels rails lately. *Tenez, mon ami.* Just you hand that telegram right over to me, here, will you? "Vanrenen, Orangers;" that's me, I reckon. *C'est pour moi, monsieur.* Excuse my looking at it right away, Miss Maitland.'

He tore the envelope open, and read it with a stare. His face grew pale. Then he whistled to himself a long low whistle. 'Well,' he said, looking hard at it and pulling himself together with an evident effort, 'that's plain enough, anyhow. No fooling around after phrases there. This won't be cured inside of four weeks, I guess. It'll take a year or two to pile that small lot up again.'

He spoke to himself, meditatively and absorbedly; but Geraldine gathered, from his sudden paleness and his vacant gaze at the flimsy blue paper he held before him, that some real calamity had fallen upon him all unawares.





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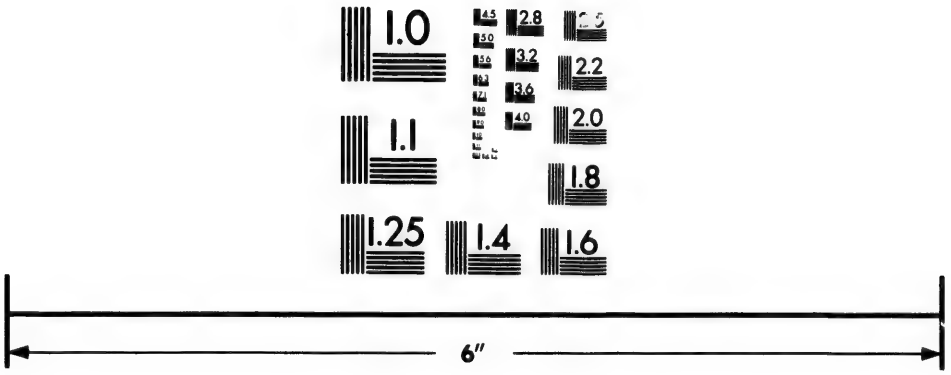

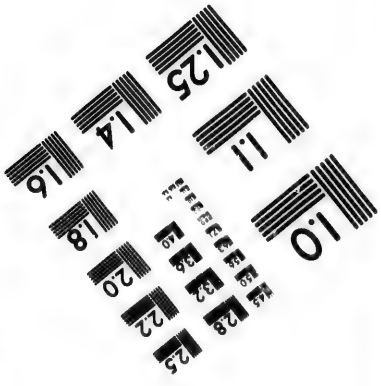

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'Nothing wrong in *Amurrica*, I hope?' she interposed interrogatively.

'Well, it ain't exactly right, any way,' Cyrus answered. with a quaint reserve in his measured tone. Your American rarely admits himself beaten. 'It's a little askew, I admit: gone wrong somewhere. Just you read that, Miss Maitland. You'll see what it indicates. It's from my partner in Cincinnati, in charge of our business.'

Geraldine took the telegram in her own hands, and read in a bewildered, half-conscious way:

'Fifth National Bank suspended payment yesterday. Pork trust burst up. Firm stone-broke. Will cable particulars as soon as I know extent of our losses. Am meeting creditors to-day for first arrangement. Assets nil. —ESELSTEIN.'

'What does it mean?' the English girl asked, with a vague sense of chilly apprehension stealing over her suddenly, though the words in which the message was couched were pure Greek to her.

'Well, it means—ruin,' the American answered with quick returning cheerfulness, continuing to draw circles with his stick on the gravel carelessly.

'Ruin!' Geraldine echoed, drawing back with a start.

'Yes, there or thereabouts,' Cyrus replied, with something like a smile of amusement at her incredulous stare. 'R-U-I-N, I've always been given to understand, spells Ruin. That's how I read it. Vanrenen and Eselstein's the name of our firm. We went it blind on the Fifth National Bank, which was largely interested in the Cincinnati pork trust. Now the trust's burst, and the firm's ruined. Fact is, we put on our bottom dollar. I'm real sorry, and no mistake, for it's an awkward event. It don't so much matter for me, of course; or even for the girls. I can go back and begin fresh; and a year or two'll pile up that lot again, I reckon. But it's rough on Eselstein, I don't deny. He's an elderly citizen, Eselstein, and he's got a rising family of his own to look after. His eldest son's just graduated at Columbia College, and was going into pork on his own account

next fall, if this awkward affair hadn't intervened to stop him.'

'But you haven't lost *everything!*' Geraldine cried, astonished.

'I guess that's just about the name of it,' Cyrus answered coolly, completing his pattern on the gravel path. 'Perhaps things mayn't be as bad as the old man thinks; and perhaps they may: but if they are, why, we've got to face 'em, like all the others. I'm not the only man, by a long shot, stone-broke to-day in Cincinnati, any way.'

They paused for a moment; and Cyrus, a little more discomposed now, crumpled the telegram nervously in his trembling fingers. Then he said with a jerk:

'It's lucky, as it happens, Miss Dumaresq hadn't—acceded to my wishes before this thing turned up. I'm glad for her sake it had gone no further. It might have made her father feel quite uncomfortable if she'd accepted a man who, as it turns out, wasn't worth the paper he was written on.'

Geraldine looked up at him with undisguised admiration.

'Very few men,' she said, with a burst of spontaneity, 'would have thought of *that* at such a moment, Mr. Vanrenen.'

'No, wouldn't they, though?' the Westerner answered with a naïve surprise. 'Well, now, it just seemed to me about the most natural idea a man could hit upon.'

'There is an answer, monsieur?' the French boy asked, standing by all this time, bareheaded and expectant.

'Well, no,' Cyrus replied in English, putting his hand inquiringly into his waistcoat-pocket. 'There ain't no answer possible, thank you, mister, as far as I'm aware—but there's a franc for you.'

At that moment Sirena, white with awe from the scene she had just been witnessing in Psyche's room, rushed out to join them.

'Cyrus,' she cried, in a fever of excitement, 'that poor girl's in a terrible state of mind. Corona and you have got to go right away this minute to Biskra.'

'Biskra!' Cyrus answered in blank surprise. 'Biskra!

Why, what's the trouble? That's away off in the desert, isn't it?'

'I know it is,' Sirena answered hastily. 'But, desert or no desert, you've got to go there. Just look at this paper!' And then in brief and very hurried words she told them the story of poor Psyche's shock and her present condition.

Cyrus's face was all aglow in a moment with horror and sympathy. He forgot his own troubles at once in listening to Psyche's. Geraldine couldn't help noticing that this strain on somebody else's hopes and affections seemed to strike the simple-hearted fellow far more profoundly than the crushing news of his own altered fortunes. He listened with evident distress and alarm. Then he said quickly:

'When does the morning train for Constantine start to-morrow?'

'I've looked it up,' Sirena answered, all aglow with the crisis. 'It starts early—quite a Western hour—5.30 a.m. But you've got to catch it!'

'Will Corona hook on?' Cyrus asked without a single second's hesitation.

'Yes. She wants to help all she can in this terrible business.'

'Very well,' Cyrus answered, moving towards the house. 'I'm ready to start. I can go right off. We've got to see this thing straight through to the bitter end, and the sooner we set about it now, the better.'

'And suppose you find him?' Geraldine suggested with a whitening cheek.

'Well, suppose we find him,' Cyrus said decisively, 'I reckon this girl's got to marry him, Miss Maitland.'

'I hope you will!' Geraldine cried with fervour.

'I hope so, too—for her sake. Oh, say, Sirena; here's a telegram the old man's sent me from Cincinnati. Make your mind up for bad news from home, my dear. It ain't a pleasant one.'

Sirena took it and glanced over it rapidly.

'Well, I presume,' she said, with perfect soberness, after she'd chewed and digested the whole contents, 'this means we must go back, first mail, to Ohio?'

'It does so,' her brother answered with dogged good-humour. 'It means we've got to begin life over again, and you won't get your portrait done at all now with Vesuvius in the background.'

'I don't care a red cent about Vesuvius,' Sirena replied, flushing, as she tore up the telegram into a hundred shreds, and scattered its fragments on the breeze among the aloes and cactuses. 'But what I *do* feel is this—I would like to stop along and help Psyche.'

'So you can,' Cyrus answered with promptitude, reckoning up internally. 'I guess I can raise enough for that, any way; but all this is neither here nor there just now. The business before the meeting at the present moment is to get started off straight ahead to Biskra.'

Sirena nodded.

'That's so,' she said, and walked back slowly and soberly toward the house.

Cyrus turned and raised his hat respectfully to Geraldine.

'Good-bye, Miss Maitland,' he said, with a pleasant smile. 'Excuse my going off to get my baggage ready.'

Geraldine looked after him with a regretful look.

'Mr. Vanrenen,' she cried in a tone of deep conviction, 'this is positively nothing short of heroic.'

The young American turned towards her a puzzled face.

'Which?' he asked, gazing around in a vague inquiring fashion for the invisible hero.

'Why, the way you all take this blow,' Geraldine answered, quite fervid, growing flushed in the face herself at her own audacity, but seizing both his hands in hers as she spoke; 'and the way you all think so little of yourselves, and so much about this terrible misfortune of poor Psyche's. You're dear good people, every one of you, I declare. I love you all for it. I never saw people behave so in my life before. As long as I live, I promise you, Mr. Vanrenen, I'll never, never, never make fun of you again, you dear good souls, for saying *Amurrica*.'

'No? Won't you, though?' Cyrus cried, holding her hand in his for a second with a faint pressure.

'No, I won't,' Geraldine answered very decisively. 'I

like you so much! I think it's so grand of you! I call you a brick! And I hope you'll find this lover of Psyche's!'

Cyrus raised his hat once more, one schoolboy blush from chin to forehead, and strolled away to the door, a ruined man, reflecting to himself, as he went, that Geraldine Maitland was really, after all, a most extremely high-toned young lady.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

ACROSS THE DESERT.

It was an endless journey, that journey across the Algerian mountains to Biskra. Cyrus Vanrenen had ample time on the way to reflect about the fate of the Cincinnati pork trust, and the Fifth National Bank failure. More than once on the road, indeed, weary with delays of the true Oriental pattern, he said to himself with a sigh that for anyone less high-toned than Psyche Dumaresq he wouldn't have undertaken such a wild-goose chase. Which, to say the truth, was doing himself an injustice; for that honest soul would have done as much, any day, for anyone else so unhappy and so lovable.

Still, the trip was undoubtedly a trial of patience. The line, in those days, went no further than Constantine, whose beetling crags Cyrus and Corona reached, tired out, at eleven at night, after a weary day's ride in a dusty, dirty, slow African railway carriage. They had no time, however, to look at the wonderful old town, perched like a robber fortress on its isolated crags, nor at the river running deep in its riven gorge a thousand feet below; for the diligence for Biskra left by five in the morning; and after a short night's rest they found themselves at that hour in the chilly gray dawn crossing the antique Devil's Bridge that spans the profound ravine, and 'lighting out,' as Cyrus graphically expressed it, for the desert.

It was their first experience of desert travelling: and they didn't like it.

For four long days they jolted on in suspense, across the mountains and the sand-flats, ever up and up, towards the oasis at Biskra. The road was indeed a wild and weird one, winding steadily upward, between arid hills of white powdery limestone, towards the high plateau of the Great Sahara. Few trees or flowers diversified the way; and those few were dwarfed and scrubby and dusty in hue, as if developed on purpose to match the grim gray highroad. Dust and rock, indeed, formed the staples of the scenery. They halted for lunch at a grimy *auberge* by two desolate salt lakes; and then up into the grimy diligence once more, and across the arid hills again, full pelt for Batna.

They were full into the heart of Africa now. Black Arab tents dotted the hillsides, and caravans of camels, in long weary strings, stepping slow and faint, passed them, ever going seaward. Trot, trot, trot, at a dreary jog, they rattled along all day; and late in the evening they pulled up short, with uncomfortable brusqueness, in front of a dismal green-blinded hotel, in a fifth-rate Frenchified colonial village of barracks and cafés. And this was Batna.

Next morning the same routine began over again. Day after day they rolled on and on, through sand, and dust, and rock, and sun in the same aimless, hopeless, forlorn fashion. At dawn they started among bare sunburnt hills; at night bare sunburnt hills stretched still for ever in long perspective before them. They seemed to go all the time from nowhere to nowhere. Only, as they went, the desert grew drearier and ever drearier, and Corona's heart sank deeper and deeper. By the third day the abomination of desolation spread everywhere around them. The soil gaped in great valleys of sand. Deep in the fissures below they could see the dry beds of prehistoric streams that drained into seas now dead and forgotten. The caravans here passed more and more frequently; but Cyrus and Corona cared little to observe the tall gray sheikhs in their white burnouses, or the women with their faces picturesquely tattooed and their arms and throats heavily laden with barbaric jewellery. Not even the little children, playing naked in

the sand with their bronzed limbs, could tempt them to look out any longer from those dusty windows. They had fallen into the lethargy of desert travel, and cared only to hurry on at such full speed as weary horses could effect to Biskra. Their one wish was to relieve Psyche from that terrible strain of suspense and agony.

At last the very road itself failed them. The diligence began to thread its way by some strange instinct across a trackless sandy plain, covered with naked brush, and strewn here and there with monstrous rounded boulders. On, and on, and ever on, starting in the morning from the middle of Nowhere, and pulling up at night in the self-same spot, to all appearances, they trudged through that monotonous sea of sand till the fourth day was fairly over. The fourth night came on, but still the sea of sand spread everywhere limitless around them. Corona leaned back in her place and dozed. How long she knew not. She woke with a start. What was this? A jolt, a jerk, a stoppage! She jumped up, half expecting to find they were upset in the desert. Had Bedouins come to demand their money or their life? But no. Strange change! They were rattling along a broad paved street. Around were lights, noises, human habitations. Cyrus put out his head at the door. Yes—no mistake this time. It was really Biskra. The diligence drew up with a sudden pull at the door of a hotel, simple but European-looking. The transition was marvellous. They had crossed for four days the outskirts of the desert, and they woke up now to find themselves still within touch of civilization on the tiled vestibule of the Hôtel du Sahara.

All the way along, as they dashed and jolted over the desert plain, one thought alone had been uppermost in their minds—would they find Linnell when they got to Biskra? And now, as they descended, weary and dusty, from that rumbling stage-coach into the cool white corridor, the first question that rose instinctively to Cyrus's lips, in very imperfect French, as the landlord advanced, bowing and scraping, to meet them, was the gasped-out phrase, delivered with the utmost anxiety and emphasis;

'Y a-t-il un M. Linnell à la maison?'

The landlord smiled and bowed and retreated.

'This way, messieurs et dames—this way to the salle-à-manger. Table-d'hôte is over, but the restaurant à la carte is still open. No, monsieur, we have no gentleman of that name at present at Biskra. What will monsieur and mademoiselle require for supper after their long journey?'

Eating and drinking were nothing now to Cyrus. He waved the man aside with his hand impatiently.

'No gentleman of that name!' he cried in his despair. 'Perhaps, though, he's staying at some other hotel. I'll go out and search for him.'

'Monsieur,' the landlord replied, with offended dignity and a profound bow, 'there *is* no other hotel at Biskra. *Cabarets*, if you will, *estaminets*, *cafés*—*fonduks* where Arabs and camels herd together—but no hotel: no other house where a gentleman of the distinction of monsieur and his friends is at all likely for one moment to establish himself. Will monsieur come this way to see his rooms? The hour is late. To-morrow the administration will willingly charge itself with the duty of making all possible inquiries for the friend of monsieur.'

'Stop!' Cyrus cried, unable to rest till he had cleared up this uncertainty. 'Haven't you heard whether an Englishman, a refugee from Khartoum, is crossing the desert in a caravan from Ideles and Ouargla?'

'Monsieur,' the landlord said, still polite and impressive, but growing impatient, 'do I not assure you that to-morrow we will make all possible inquiries? Monsieur your friend is not in the town. Accept my assurances. But as soon as we can we will discover his whereabouts.'

That closed the matter for the moment. It was no use arguing. The landlord, good man, was bland, but imperative. Cyrus was compelled in the end to retire, vanquished, to his bedroom.

Supper, to their surprise, was clean, neat, and simple. The hotel, though rough, seemed pleasantly cool and quiet; and they found the beds soft, fresh, and excellent. French civilization stood clearly on its mettle, resolved to create a miniature Paris in the oases of Sahara. But

Cyrus hardly slept a wink that night for all that. He seemed to have come the whole way in vain, and to be as far from the object of his search as ever.

Towards morning he dozed, and awoke with a start—to find at last it was broad daylight. The desert sun was pouring in at the window in one fierce blaze of light. He rose and looked out. The beauty of the scene fairly took his breath away. It was a paradise of palm-trees Great graceful stems rose by thousands on every side, waving their long lithe arms in the air to their own slow music. He dressed in haste, swallowed down a cup of morning coffee, and sallied forth alone into the one long street of Biskra. There he made his way straight to the Mairie of the commune, and proceeded to ask for such information as he could gain about the rumoured English traveller.

His heart gave a jump when the courteous official, who received his request with a smile, motioned him into a chair, and proceeded to overhaul with the usual deliberation a well-worn bundle of green-tape-bound letters. Nothing in France or any French colony without abundant green tape. Cyrus waited and listened eagerly.

At last the courteous official, after much hunting, found the particular docket of which he was in search.

'Monsieur,' he answered, consulting it, with his most consequential air, 'we learn in effect that on the 20th of this month a caravan from the desert did really arrive, much distressed, at Ouargla. In that caravan, as our agents advise us, was a person, supposed to be a European, and giving his name as Linn or Linnell, whom we conjecture to be an English refugee from Khartoum; but on this subject, mark well, our Government has as yet no official information. This person Linnell—as we believe him to be named—is now seriously ill with fever at Ouargla. He will proceed by caravan to this station as soon as our agents consider him in a fit condition for desert travelling.'

'Ouargla!' Cyrus cried. 'Where's that? Can I wire along? Is there any telegraph there?'

The official smiled once more, a provoking smile.

'Monsieur,' he answered blandly, 'here the world

ends. Civilization stops dead short at Biskra. Ouargla is merely a frontier post. No mails, no telegraph.'

'Well, but how did you get this news then?' Cyrus asked in despair.

'There are missionary brothers at Ouargla village,' the official responded in the same bland voice. 'They took charge of the invalid, and forwarded the news to us.'

'How can I get there?' Cyrus asked, determined at once to go on and meet his man in the midst of the desert. 'Is there any diligence?'

The official smiled still more broadly than before.

'You can go on foot,' he answered. 'Or you can go on a camel. But there are no roads, no vehicles. For myself, I advise you to await your compatriot here in Biskra.'

In a moment Cyrus's mind was made up. The Western American does not debate: he acts instinctively. Off without a second's delay he rushed to the telegraph office, and sent a despatch to Sirena at the Orangers:

'Man supposed to be one of the Linnells lies dangerously ill at a place called Ouargla. Am crossing the desert on a camel to find him. Mean to reach him, dead or alive. Shall wire again when I have anything to communicate.'

Three hours later, Corona and he were making their trial trip on the ship of the desert, outward bound, with a rolling sea, from Biskra to Ouargla.

Camel-riding is by no means an easy art for a stranger, and they were both beginning to get terribly tired of the pitching and tossing under that burning sun, when, some miles from Biskra, they descried in front of them a long line of patient beasts threading their way with slow and stately tread to meet them over the desert. Cyrus's heart came up into his mouth as he pointed towards the distant line eagerly, and exclaimed in French, with a gulp of surprise:

'What do we see over yonder? A caravan from Ouargla?'

The Arab by his side caught at the words quickly, and, summoning up all his French, replied at once, with many shakes and nods:

'Oui, oui: caravan: du côté d'Ouargla!'

There's something inexpressibly solemn about the stillness and silence of the great desert. Even Cyrus's Western-American mind felt awed for a moment at sight of that long string of gaunt-limbed beasts silhouetted in black against the pale sky-line of that gray desolation. He looked and wondered. The caravan advanced to meet them very slowly. Its camels, Corona could see for herself, as she clung to the projecting pommels of her own saddle, were weary and footsore with their long tramp across the burning sand from their distant station. Most of them were laden with heavy bales, and led by drivers, who walked by their sides with the free bold step of the untamed Bedouin. Their humps were shrunken away to mere bags of skin, that lopped over and fell on their bare sides—the sure sign of a long and tedious journey. But what attracted Cyrus's attention more than anything else was a sort of litter or palanquin, that occupied the midst, borne by four bare-legged M'zabite bearers, and apparently containing some stranger of importance. His heart beat quicker for a moment at the sight. That litter must surely contain —the mysterious Englishman.

'Halt here!' he cried aloud to his Arab driver; and the Arab, accepting the tone for what it meant, with a sudden jerk brought the camel to a walk, and then by slow degrees to an unwilling standstill.

'Does any one of you speak French?' Cyrus called out, in the nearest approach he could make to that language, from his uncertain perch on the camel's back.

The foremost Arab of the caravan bowed politely in answer.

'Monsieur,' he answered, in what even Cyrus recognised at once for the pure Parisian of an educated gentleman, 'I am a Frenchman myself. What can I do for monsieur?'

'*You* a Frenchman!' Cyrus cried, surprised, scanning his Arab dress from head to foot attentively.

'Yes, monsieur. We missionary priests of Our Lady of Africa dress always thus in Arab costume,' the stranger answered quietly. 'For that, they call us the White

Brothers. We have come from Ouargla in charge of an English refugee from Khartoum. We are taking him for a European doctor to see at Biskra.'

In his eagerness and anxiety Cyrus scrambled down boldly from his seat on the camel, and approached the missionary with a perfect torrent of inquiries.

'Do you know his name?' he cried. 'Is he ill? Do you think he'll recover?'

'Monsieur, we do not know his name, because he is far too ill to be questioned yet: but the name on a paper he carried in his pocket is Linnell, we notice.'

Cyrus could hardly restrain himself from crying out aloud in his delight and surprise. But which Linnell? That was now the question.

'I have come in search of him,' he cried, all eagerness; 'I came from Algiers on purpose to look for him. Is he in the litter here? Can I see him, monsieur?'

The missionary beckoned to the M'zabites by the litter, who had halted to observe the upshot of this curious rencontre. One of them, obedient to the unspoken command, lifted up with his big black hand the corner of the curtains that concealed the patient. There, on a mattress, with closed eyes and bloodless cheeks, lay stretched, half dead, a man with a long dark beard, the growth of a year spent in the tropical African interior. The man, who had once been tall and handsome, and who still bore on his face something of the type of the English aristocrat, was evidently very ill indeed. He never opened his eyes even when they halted, nor gave the faintest sign of life or motion. To Cyrus, this suspense was terrible indeed. To think he had found the very man Linnell, whoever he might be, and yet could not solve that last awful question —for Psyche's sake—whether it was the artist himself or his soldier cousin!

The man looked like a soldier. And yet there was something of the artist, too, in the cut of the features, so Cyrus fancied.

'How did he get to Ouargla?' the young American asked again with profound interest.

Corona leaned over from her saddle in breathless anxiety to hear the answer.

'There's some mystery about it,' the missionary replied, letting drop the flap of the litter once more. 'All we know is this, from what we can gather—there were two of them at first, but one was murdered. So much he managed to tell us in brief when he tottered, more dead than alive, into Ouargla. They seem to have struggled across the desert with a passing caravan; but some difficulty arose, we don't know what, and they got separated from their party, we imagine, some way from Ideles, though we know nothing yet for certain. Then there was a fight—a fight or a pursuit. At any rate, this poor fellow staggered in at last to a friendly caravan, alone and wounded, his burnous stained and clotted with blood, and a couple of flesh-cuts on his shoulder unhealed; and all the account he could give of himself was merely what I tell you—that he had lost his camel two days before, and had come on on foot, for many kilometres, in the direction of Ouargla.'

'He was wounded!' Cyrus exclaimed, aghast.

'Yes, seriously wounded. And from what he mumbles now and again in his delirium—for he's very delirious—one of our brothers, who understands a little English, believes there was some fight either with Arabs on the way, or with a fellow-Englishman.'

'Corona,' Cyrus cried, 'this is our man, of course. We must go back to Biskra, and telegraph to Miss Dumaresq. Will he ever get any better, Father? If possible, before he dies, I must manage to have a few words at least with him.'

The missionary shook his head slowly.

'He may,' he said, 'or he may not. Who knows? Le bon Dieu disposes it. But in any case, I think it would be dangerous to question him.'

Cyrus mounted his camel in silence once more. It was painful to remain in such suspense so long; but there was no help for it. They rode back solemnly with the caravan to the hotel at Biskra. There the invalid was lifted with care from his litter, and laid in comfort on a European bed—the first he had slept upon since he left Khartoum in fear and trembling a twelvemonth earlier.

Late that night, as Cyrus sat in the bare small salon,

endeavouring to spell out with much difficulty a very dog-eared, paper-covered novel in a foreign tongue, by a person bearing the name of Daudet, the White Brother came in with an anxious face, and laid his hand authoritatively on the young man's shoulder.

'Come, mon fils,' he said; 'the Englishman is conscious. He would like to speak with you for a few short minutes. He seems to be in a very critical state, and would perhaps wish before he dies to unburden his soul—to make some statement or entrust some commissions to the ear of a compatriot.'

Cyrus rose and followed the priest eagerly into the sick-room. He would now, at least, learn which of the two it was. In five minutes more poor Psyche's fate would be sealed for ever. He would learn if it was the artist, or his soldier cousin.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

FORTUNE'S WHEEL.

At Algiers, meanwhile, things had been going from bad to worse with Psyche. Her sight grew daily dimmer and dimmer, and her general health feebler and feebler. Suspense was rapidly wearing her out. The shock, if it came, Sirena thought, would surely kill her.

And yet, at times, almost as if by magic, the poor broken girl recovered for many minutes together the use of her eyes as perfectly as ever. Of a sudden, as she stood or walked across the room, the misty blur that obscured her vision would now and again clear away with mysterious rapidity, and reveal, as in an electric flash, all the objects around with a vivid distinctness that fairly took her breath away. At such moments things came out not only as bright and clear as of old, but with a startling brilliancy of colour and outline that she had never known in her normal condition. The dormant nerves, recalled to intermittent activity for a few brief seconds by some internal stimulus, seemed to concentrate on a single perceptive effort all the hoarded energy of a week's idleness.

It was on the day of Cyrus's arrival at Biskra that Psyche sat in the pretty little salon at the Villa des Orangers, with Sirena's hand entwined in her own, and her father watching her earnestly with those keen eyes of his from a seat on the central ottoman.

'No telegram from your brother yet to-day, Sirena,' she said with a sigh. 'How slow the days go! A week on Saturday!'

'The telegram will come soon, darling,' Sirena answered, smoothing her hair and pressing her hand gently. 'Would you like me to read to you—the end of that story?'

'What story?' Psyche asked, looking up vacantly with her sightless eyes in Sirena's direction. 'Oh yes; I remember. You were reading it this morning. No, dear; I don't even remember what it was about. I don't think I heard the words themselves at all; but the pleasant sound of your voice in my ears seemed to soothe me and ease me. You can't think, Sirena, what a comfort it is, when you don't see, to hear familiar voices humming around you; and yours is almost like a sister's voice to me now already. But I don't care even for reading this afternoon. Where's papa? I thought he was here a minute ago.' And she turned her head round by pure force of habit, as if to look for him.

'Here I am, my child,' Haviland Dumaresq answered in a low voice. 'Don't you feel me quite close? I'm sitting by your side. I won't go away from you.'

'Don't,' Psyche said simply. 'I want you all now—as long as it lasts—everybody that loves me. I didn't hear you, papa. I suppose I shall learn in time—if I live—to listen and hear you. One can't accustom one's self all at once to being blind. It's so slow to learn. I turn my head still, and try to look, when I want to find anyone. By-and-by, I dare say, I shall remember to listen for them.'

'But you're not going to be blind for ever, Psyche,' her father cried with the vehemence of despair. 'Not for ever, my child. They all say so. The doctors declare you'll get over it by-and-by. It's purely functional, they tell me—purely functional.'

'I don't know,' Psyche answered in a very slow but patient voice. 'It doesn't much matter. At times I see again quite distinctly—oh, so distinctly! though not by an effort of will, as they said, at all. It seems to come to me quite by accident. But the odd thing is, after each time that I see so clearly once more, I fancy it all grows darker and dimmer and blacker than ever. The minutes of clearness seem like the last flickers of a fire before it goes out. My sight is ebbing away from me piecemeal.'

At that moment there came a sharp knock at the door, and Antoine, the good-humoured Swiss waiter, entered briskly with a bundle of letters in his hand.

'The post,' he said, sorting them over hastily. 'Meester Vanrenen; mademoiselle, you will keep that for him against his return. M. Waldeck—Madame Smit—Mees Vilson—Mees Dumaresq.'

The father rose and tried in his haste to secure the letter; but before he could snatch it from Antoine's hands, Psyche, too, had risen and stepped boldly forward, with a firm tread, which showed Sirena at once, in the twinkling of an eye, that a momentary interval of vivid sight had once more been vouchsafed her. 'Give it to me,' she cried, holding her hand out eagerly. 'I'll read it myself. I can see now. I'm not afraid. Whatever it may be, I'd rather read it.'

'Psyche,' her father exclaimed, laying his hand on her arm with a warning gesture, 'don't try your eyes, if they *can* see for a minute. Spare them, my darling. Let me read it first, or give it to Sirena. Besides, I'm afraid of what it might contain for you. Let me look at it, there's a good girl. I'll see what it is for you.'

But Psyche answered 'No' with perfect firmness, clasping it hard in her small hand. 'I can read now, and I'd rather read. Besides, it's nothing. It isn't from Biskra. It's only from home. It has an English stamp on it.' And she looked at the envelope with almost the unconcerned manner of the old days, when to see and to read was a matter of course with her.

The envelope bore an embossed seal on the gummed flap: 'Burchell and Dobbs, Solicitors, Chancery Lane, London.' So much Sirena took in at a glance, as she

looked askance at the letter curiously in her friend's hand.

Psyche broke the seal with trembling fingers: not that the letter could matter much to her now; but everything in these days seemed so fraught with latent and unspeakable terrors. She never knew what a day might bring forth in the present crisis.

As she gazed at it, the first words that met her eyes almost drove her blind again with horror and astonishment. What on earth could they mean? What on earth could they portend? For the letter was headed, with lawyer-like precision, 'In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased. Probate granted.'

'In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased!' Linnell, deceased! Linnell, deceased! Oh, horrible! horrible! Psyche laid down the letter for a moment, still clutched as by iron in her two white hands, but folded on her lap as though she could not even bear to look at it. Then he was dead, dead, really dead at last! The law itself had declared all hope was over. In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased! Probate granted! Probate granted!

How it rang in her ears! How it whirled through her brain! How it pictured itself visibly on her wearied eyeballs! She raised her eyes mechanically to the white-washed ceiling. In letters of blood, half a yard long, she saw written there: 'In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased.' It was printed as in marble on the very fabric of her failing retina.

She turned away in her horror, and looked down at the floor. On the yellow Persian rug she saw it still, a negative image in dark running script-hand. It came out deep purple. It would follow her to the grave, she firmly believed. Linnell, deceased! Linnell, deceased! No power on earth could remove it now from her burning eyeballs.

She closed her eyes, but it floated there still, a visible line of fire amid the thick darkness. 'In the matter of C. A. Linnell, deceased.' Dead! dead! dead! So he was dead indeed. The letter pursued her. It crushed her. It haunted her.

She took up the fatal missive once more and tried to read it through; but she couldn't, she couldn't. Her

eyesight was failing her again now. Those deadly words blurred and distorted the rest of the paper. She saw the whole as a transparency through those awful lines. Her strength gave way. She closed her eyes and cried. 'Read it to me, Sirena,' she sobbed aloud, letting it drop; and Sirena read it.

It was a long and formal statement by Linnell's solicitors of the disposition made of the deceased's property. Sirena hesitated whether she should read every word, in all its naked official bluntness, with its professional absence of emotion or feeling; but each time that she paused or faltered, Psyche laid a cold white hand on her wrist once more, and murmured resolutely: 'Go on. I can bear it. I want to hear all. It's better I should know.' And Sirena read on, to the uttermost syllable.

'Our late client,' the lawyers' letter remarked, with legal periphrasis, 'had made a will before leaving England (copy of which is herewith annexed), whereby he devised the bulk of his real and personal estate to his sole legatee, Psyche, daughter of Haviland Dumaresq, Esquire, of the Wren's Nest, Petherton Episcopi, in the county of Dorset, as a testimony to the profound respect he felt for her father's distinguished literary and philosophical ability.' Their late client, it appeared, had gone to Khartoum, and there, in all probability, had been killed in the general massacre of European defenders after the Mahdi's troops entered the city—absolute legal proof of death being in this case difficult or indeed impossible. The firm had waited for a full year before attempting to take out probate. That was a longer time than had been allowed to elapse with regard to the estate of any other of the Khartoum victims. The late Mr. C. A. Linnell, however, had particularly arranged with their firm that in case of serious ground for apprehension arising, a reasonable period should be permitted to intervene before definite action was taken in the matter. Under these circumstances they had waited long; but probate had now at last been granted to the executor named therein; and it was the firm's duty, as solicitors to that executor, to announce to Miss Dumaresq that the property devised

was henceforward hers, and hers only. With reference, however, to the Linnell estates at large—that was to say, the estate of the late Sir Austen Linnell, Baronet, deceased at the same time with his cousin at Khartoum—it was their duty to inform her that a serious question might hereafter arise as to whether it had ever passed at all into Mr. C. A. Linnell's possession. If Mr. C. A. Linnell, the testator, predeceased his cousin, the late baronet, then and in that case——

But there Psyche, brave and resolute as she was, could stand it no longer. She clasped her hands tight on her lap and burst into tears. She could never inherit her dead lover's fortune. She had murdered him! She had murdered him! She had sent him to his death. And now she knew how much he had loved her. In the very moment of that first great disappointment he had thought of her and loved her.

As for Haviland Dumaresq, bowed and bent with grief, he sat there still, listening and wondering over this strange news, with a horrible turmoil of conflicting emotions, and forming already in his whirling brain fresh plans and day-dreams for poor heart-broken Psyche. 'Give me the will,' he cried, turning quickly to Sirena. The girl handed him the attested copy. Haviland Dumaresq buried himself at once in that and the letter, while Sirena turned to lay poor sobbing Psyche's weary little head on her comforting shoulder.

The old man read and re-read for some minutes in silence. Then he looked up amazed, and cried aloud in a voice full almost of awe and reverence: 'Then Linnell had a fortune of something like seven thousand a year, it seems, Psyche.'

'Papa!' Psyche exclaimed, rising up before him in ineffable horror, 'if you say another word about that unspeakable Thing, you will kill me, you will kill me!'

Haviland Dumaresq turned back with a reeling brain to those astonishing figures. The mad mood of greed was upon him once more, the unnatural mood brought about by those long years of continuous opium-eating. What a fool he had been! and how dearly he had paid for it! To turn away a man with seven thousand a year

—a man that Psyche loved, a man who loved Psyche! But all had come out well in the end, for all that. The man had done as he ought to have done—made a just will in Psyche's favour; and Psyche, who loved him, would now inherit everything. He was not without remorse, of course, for his own part in the drama. It would have been better, no doubt—in some ways better—if only the young fellow could have married Psyche, instead of dying and leaving her his fortune. The iron had sunk deep into Psyche's soul: she had suffered much: it would be long before those scars could heal over entirely. But they would heal in time—they would heal in time: all human emotions weaken in effect with each mental repetition. And Psyche would now own the fortune herself. She would own it herself, and marry whom she liked. For in time, without a doubt, she would be wise and marry.

Not Cyrus Vanrenen. Not that empty young man. No, indeed, he was never good enough for Psyche. In a period of trouble, and under special conditions of fear for the future, Haviland Dumaresq had been willing for a moment to admit that vague and unsatisfactory young American—vulgar, vulgar, and bad tone too, though undoubtedly good-hearted—to the high privilege of paying court to Psyche. But now that Psyche's future was otherwise secured—now that the load was lifted from his soul—now that all was coming straight by an unwonted miracle—he had other ambitions, other schemes for his Psyche. No American for her—an heiress in her own right, and Dumaresq's daughter. She could command whom she would—she could choose her own fate—she was rich, rich, rich—and Dumaresq's daughter.

Her eyes, he felt confident, would get well by-and-by. This fit of disappointed love was sharp and critical, to be sure; but she had youth on her side: at her age one can outlive and outgrow anything.

Except, perhaps, a broken heart; and Haviland Dumaresq did not even yet understand that Psyche's heart was really broken.

CHAPTER XL.

WHICH LINNELL?

For the next two days, in spite of his fears for Psyche's health, Haviland Dumaresq lived once more in one of his wild, old-fashioned opium-dreams—without the opium. An opium-dream actually come true at last! Psyche rich! Psyche provided for! Psyche her own mistress in life, after all! Psyche free to choose whom she would; to bestow herself with regal imperiousness where she willed; to carve out her own future, no man compelling her. His waking vision had worked itself out in a most unexpected and inconceivable way! Psyche was at last where he had always wished her to be, and never truly hoped or expected to see her.

It was grand! It was glorious! It was sublime! It was magnificent! What was Linnell's life to Psyche's happiness?

One nightmare alone intervened to mar his triumph. Not Psyche's blindness. That would surely come all right now in the long-run. The mistress of so great a fortune as that had nothing to do but open her eyes and see straightway. His nightmare was the fear lest Sir Austen, if indeed it were really he who lay ill at Biskra, might manage to get the will set aside, and to claim his own share in the Linnell succession. That nightmare weighed upon his spirits not a little. He occupied himself for most of the intervening time, before Cyrus returned, with writing an interminable letter to Burchell and Dobbs about this alarming and distressful contingency.

There was another contingency, too, on the cards, of course: the contingency that the man who lay ill at Biskra might prove to be, not Sir Austen at all, but his cousin the painter. That chance, however, Haviland Dumaresq could hardly fear, and dared hardly hope for. Did not even the man's own lawyers give him up for lost? Had not probate been granted for the will by officialdom itself? Was it likely anything would ever again be heard of him?

Yet if, by any chance, it should really turn out to be

Charles Linnell, Haviland Dumaresq felt sure in his own mind that all would be for the best, and Psyche in the end would be no loser by it. For if Linnell left her his heiress when rejected and refused, why, surely when he turned up again, safe and sound at last, he could hardly do anything else than marry her. The load of blood-guiltiness would then be lifted from his own soul, and from Psyche's. Poor innocent Psyche! How much and how vainly had he made her suffer!

So he watched and waited, watched and waited, watched and waited for news from Biskra.

Away over there in the desert, meanwhile, Cyrus Vanrenen, the slave of duty, sat in the best bedroom of the bare little hotel, by the bedside of the unknown sick man from the South, who seemed at intervals delirious and dying. Time after time, reason would apparently return to the patient in a sudden flicker; but time after time, as fast as it flared up, the flicker died out again before Cyrus could make out exactly what it was the stranger so eagerly wished to tell him. For the wanderer's mind seemed sadly terrified and ill at ease: sometimes, Cyrus fancied, he gave one the impression of being haunted by something very like remorse—or might it be only pure panic terror?

All that Cyrus could gather from his rambling talk was merely this: that somebody had been murdered. He recurred over and over again in his delirium to some mangled corpse, which he seemed to behold in his mind's eye, lying unburied on the sand, away beyond Ouargla.

'Cover it up! Bury it!' he cried more than once in an agony of despair, or perhaps of penitence. 'They're coming up from behind! They'll see it and discover us! Just heap the sand above it a little with your hands, so, so! How hot the sand feels! O God, how hot! It makes one's hands sting. It burns one as one touches it!'

Cyrus soothed him gently with his cool palm.

'Come here, Corona,' he murmured in an undertone to his sister. 'The poor fellow's delirious! Come you here and look after him! A little eau de Cologne on his forehead, if you can. There, there, that'll ease him.'

The stranger shrank back in horror at the touch. It was more than delirium. It was the temporary unhinging that often follows a great crisis.

'How it bleeds!' he exclaimed in dismay, looking down at his hands, his eyes all bloodshot. 'How it bleeds as one touches it! How pale, how white! I can hear them coming up even now from behind! Fiends that they are, if they find the body they'll mangle it and mutilate it!'

Corona drew a tiny bottle from the charms of her chatelaine, and poured a few drops of eau de Cologne on her palm with quiet tenderness. Then she pressed it to his head.

'That'll relieve him a bit, I guess,' she whispered, leaning over him. 'One can see he's terribly anxious in his mind about something.'

'Seems like remorse,' Cyrus suggested in an undertone.

Corona shook her head in charitable doubt.

'More like terror,' she answered, with a scrutinizing look. 'They must have chased him hard. He ran for his life, and just got off with his bones whole, I reckon. These Arabs must pretty nearly have made a corpse of him.'

At the sound of that word the mysterious patient, drinking it in greedily, cried out once more in a wild cry of alarm:

'The corpse! The corpse! I must bury it! bury it!'

'He's stronger now,' the White Brother remarked in French, as the patient clutched Corona's arm spasmodically. 'He couldn't have clutched like that, I'm sure, at Ouargla. The quinine's done him good. But ever since we've had him he's talked this way. He's terribly troubled in spirit about something.'

The patient lay stretched on the bed in a nightshirt supplied by the people at the hotel. His own Arab clothes hung up from a peg behind the bedroom door. A happy thought seized Corona.

'Perhaps his underclothing's marked, Cy,' she suggested hopefully. 'If so, we could see which of the two it is—if it's really either of them.'

Cyrus rose and examined the clothes with anxious

care. Not a sign or a mark could be found upon them anywhere. He shook his head with a despondent sigh.

'No good,' he answered gloomily. 'The man's dying. And he'll die without our ever having been able to identify him.'

The White Brother understood the action, though not quite the words.

'*Inutile, monsieur,*' he put in with a decisive air. 'We searched everything. Not a scrap of writing about him anywhere, except the papers detained at Ouargla. *Du reste*, it would be hopeless to expect a name. He could only escape by assuming Islam. Through that fanatic population, so lately roused to a pitch of savage enthusiasm, no confessed Christian could possibly make his way in peace or safety. We wouldn't even venture to penetrate there ourselves. To be suspected of Christianity in such a case is to sign one's death-warrant. A name written in European letters on an article of clothing would suffice to condemn any man to instant massacre.'

'We must give it up, then, Corona,' Cyrus exclaimed, with a groan. 'We can only describe what he's like to Miss Dumaresq; and he ain't like much except a scarecrow at present. But perhaps she'll be able to say, even so, if it's him. We could get the body photographed, if he dies in the hotel here.'

That evening, in the salon of the little inn, a new guest, a big-bearded Englishman, joined the small party of desert travellers. He was a bluff engineer of the rougher type, with much-bronzed face and unpolished manners, who had seen service in South America and Mexico long enough to forget his aboriginal position as an English gentleman. His present business, he told them, with the frankness of his kind, was to explore the desert region, with a view to satisfying himself as to the feasibility of the famous Roudaire scheme for flooding a portion of the Saharan depression, and converting the area into an inland sea. He didn't exactly think the thing could be done, but he thought if only you could float your company there was a jolly good engineering job in it. Like everybody else at Biskra, however, he was deeply

interested in the story of the stray refugee from Khartoum, and asked many curious questions of Cyrus as to the man's appearance, state, and chances of recovery. It was seldom indeed that the little forlorn Saharan town had possessed so striking a sensation; and it made the most of it. Biskra gossip lived for the moment on nothing at all but the name and fame of the survivor of the Soudan.

'There were a pair of them at first!' the engineer repeated thoughtfully, as Cyrus finished his uncertain tale. 'And they ran away from a caravan on camels! *Two* camels or *one*, I wonder? One of them dead, and one escaped! A curious coincidence. Reminds me exactly of that singular story old Jaurez told me when I was over in Mexico!'

'What story?' Cyrus asked, anxious for anything that might cast any light upon the stranger's mysterious history.

'Well, perhaps it ain't quite fair to this man to tell the circumstance,' the engineer answered, with a tinge of hesitation. 'It seems like raising suspicion against him without due ground, when, for all I know, he may be all right—as right as ninepence. But it *does* look odd, certainly, this raving about the corpse. Fishy, decidedly. Reminds me to a T of that curious story of poor old Juarez's. Juarez, you know, was a Mexican president: president, they call it, for the sake of the sound: dictator or despot comes nearer the mark—just what the old Greeks we read about at school used to call a tyrant.'

Cyrus nodded a cautious assent, though his personal acquaintance with ancient Hellas was strictly confined to the information contained in Cornell's 'Universal History for the use of the Common Schools of the State of Ohio.'

'Well,' the engineer continued, stroking his beard with his hand in a contemplative way, 'it was like this, you see. On one occasion, when they were getting up what they call in those parts a revolution—a jolly good riot, we'd call it in Europe—old Juarez had to fly for his life from Mexico City, away across the plain, with a small band of devoted adherents. So he turned out at dead of night and ran for it like wildfire. They rode on and on

across the plain of Mexico, hotly pursued the whole night through by the opposite party, till, one by one, the devoted adherents, finding the pursuit a good deal too warm for their sensitive natures, dropped off at a tangent in different directions, and left Juarez at the dawn of day almost unattended. At last the old blackguard found himself reduced, as luck would have it, to a single companion, almost dead-beat, and with the hue and cry still full pelt after them. He told me the story himself, at Mexico, long afterwards. He was a rare hand at a story, was old Juarez. Well, at the end of his ride, as he was nearing a little mountain fort still held in force by his own party, blessed if his horse didn't give way all at once, and come down a cropper on the plain under him. Juarez, in a dead funk, called out to his friend to halt and save him. The friend halted, like a fool as he was, and took the old reprobate up behind him—two together on the same tired beast, you understand—and on they rode for dear life once more, full pelt to the shelter. Presently Juarez, looking back over his shoulder, saw the enemy were gaining on them fast; and, making sure the horse could never reach the gates of the fort, burdened as he was with two riders abreast, he decided like a shot on immediate action.

'"And what did you do?" said I, when he reached that point, just as I'm telling it to you myself this moment.

'"Why, fortunately," said he, "I had the presence of mind to draw my pistol and shoot the other man dead on the horse before me." His friend, you must recollect, who'd risked his own life to stop and save him. "I'd the presence of mind," says he, "to draw and shoot him."'

'My goodness!' Corona cried; 'you don't mean to say he actually killed him!'

'Yes, he did, honour bright, I give you my word,' the bearded engineer responded cheerfully. 'A rare old blackguard, old Juarez was. And what's more, he boasted of it, too, just as I told you. "I had the presence of mind," he said, "to draw my pistol straight off and shoot him." He thought no more of it than that, I assure you. An episode of his life—that was all—to Juarez.'

At the door of her room that night, as she went to bed, Corona paused, candle in hand, and looked anxiously at Cyrus.

'Cy,' she said, 'I don't know why, but I wish to goodness that engineer hadn't told us that awful story about the wicked old Mexican.'

'So do I,' Cyrus answered, with averted eyes. 'It's—it's made me feel uncomfortable, some, about the man on the bed in the room down yonder.'

'I can't help fancying, myself,' Corona went on, 'that this is the wrong one, and he either killed or deserted the right one to save his own life at a critical point, just like the Mexican.'

Cyrus's face grew gloomier still.

'We ain't got any right to judge,' he answered leniently. 'But suppose it was the right one, though—eh, Coroney?—and he'd either killed or run away from the wrong one? Wouldn't that be worse, almost, in the end, for Miss Dumaresq?'

Corona's honest heart recoiled with horror from the bare insinuation of so hideous a solution. Psyche's lover could do no wrong.

'Oh no, Cy!' she exclaimed loyally. 'It couldn't be that. I'd stake my life on it. I'd bet my bottom dollar against that, any way. If there's anything wrong, it *must* be the other one. Psyche couldn't ever fall in love with a man who could go and do a thing like that, you may be certain.'

CHAPTER XLI.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.

To Haviland Dumaresq's delight and surprise, Psyche still bore up bravely. Why, it would have been hard indeed to say. Whether, in spite of herself and her gloomy presentiments, she still cherished internally some secret hope that Linnell after all might have escaped from Khartoum and across the desert to Biskra, he hardly knew; but, in any case, he was pleased to find her still so buoyant. He hugged himself on the discovery. This

trouble would pass over in the end, he felt sure. The mistress of such a splendid fortune as hers must surely be happy!

Poor sordid old thinker! For himself, he would have scouted all ideas of gain; but for Psyche—he was as greedy as the veriest money-grubber in the city of London. Nay, in his own mind, Haviland Dumaresq already gave himself, on Psyche's behalf, all the airs and importance of a wealthy person. Psyche was now a lady of position. He could hardly help letting Sirena feel the difference in his treatment of herself. And even to Psyche he often implied by a half-uttered side-hint that he regarded her as the possessor of a great estate, with infinite possibilities for the future still lying before her.

But Psyche, poor Psyche, only shrank back in horror from the hideous thought, and cried to herself with unspeakable remorse, a thousand times over, 'His money! His money! And I sent him to his death! I could never touch a single penny of it.'

And still she bore up, till despair should deepen into perfect certainty. For her father's sake, and with all the force of her father's nature, she strove to be calm; she schooled herself to fortitude—till news should come from Biskra.

One bright afternoon Sirena and Dumaresq had taken her between them out upon the dry African hillside, where the pine-trees grew green and the broom blossomed yellow, and the chirp of the cicadas resounded from the rosemary. They seated her down on the arid rocks, under the shadow of a tall and flowery eucalyptus. Birds sang and bees hummed, and in the valley beneath the murmur of water plashed among the stickles. The highroad to Birmandreis ran just below them as they sat, and Psyche, looking down at it with all her might, half fancied she could dimly make out a long white line that threaded the valley; for her eyes were almost wholly blinded now, and she never expected to see any more with them.

As she looked, however, and strained her eyeballs, dark objects passed now and then in shadowy show along the white strip, as one may sometimes see reflections from the street thrown up in vague outline on the ceiling through

the curtains. One of them, Sirena said, was an Arab on a donkey; another, a cart going in to Algiers with fruit for the market; a third, a group of veiled Moorish women, coming home from their weekly visit to the cemeteries. Psyche could dimly realize, when told, how each object answered to Sirena's description.

And then came a fourth, a smaller one than the rest; and that, Sirena imprudently blurted out, was a telegraph boy from the office at Mustapha Palais.

At the word, Psyche's heart rose up to her mouth within her. She followed the dark spot vaguely along the dim white line.

'He's going to the Orangers,' she cried with a start, as the object halted against a second white blur in the distance. Then the truth flashed across her with a wild surmise: 'Sirena, Sirena, it's a telegram from Biskra!'

Sirena, alarmed at her own imprudence, ran down the hill in hot haste and tore it open hurriedly. It was addressed outside to Haviland Dumaresq; but in her flurry and excitement she did not pause for a moment to hesitate over a trifle like that. A question of life and death was at issue now. She unfolded the paper and glanced at the contents. Her heart stood still within her in horror as she read:

'Patient convalescent and quite sensible, though very weak. He gives his name as Sir Austen Linnell, and has come direct through the Soudan from Khartoum. His cousin also escaped from the massacre, and accompanied him on his retreat as far as the desert, but was shot through the heart by Arabs at Ouargla some ten days since, and died without pain. Break the news gently to Miss Dumaresq.—VANRENEN.'

So it was all over! The refugee was the wrong one!

She hurried back, panting, but restraining her tears with a terrible effort, for Psyche's sake, and handed the paper without one word of note or comment to Dumaresq. The gray old philosopher read doom in her face, but spoke not a syllable, lest the shock should come too

suddenly upon Psyche. He took the telegram from her hands and read it through in silence. Psyche gazed up at him with appealing inquiry from those sightless orbs of hers.

'What does it say, papa?' she murmured, gasping.

Dumaresq pressed her hand in his. His eyes were full. His voice was too choked for distinct utterance.

'My darling,' he whispered in a very low tone, 'try to bear up. For my sake, Psyche, don't let it kill you.'

Psyche glanced over his shoulder anxiously at the paper. Her eyes, too, were flooded with rising tears. She brushed them away, and tried hard to spell it out. But it was too late now. No effort of will could bring back sight any more to those blinded pupils. Not even her eager desire to know the whole truth—to end this suspense, to face the worst—enabled her to break through that thick black cloud that obscured her vision. The world of form and colour was gone, gone utterly. She could not see even in dim outline. Nothing but darkness rose up before her.

'I can't make it out,' she murmured, grasping her father's arm hard. 'Read it to me, papa. I can bear it. I can bear it.'

Dumaresq's voice faltered terribly.

'I can't read it,' he cried in turn, breaking down in the effort. 'Read it to her, Sirena. I've no voice left. The worst will be better than this suspense she's been living in.'

Sirena read on as far as the words, 'Sir Austen Linnell;' then Psyche's breath came and went suddenly and she clenched her hands hard to keep herself from fainting.

'And *Him?*' she said slowly, holding up with an effort. 'Does your brother know anything about *Him*, Sirena?' and those dim eyes fell upon her faithful new friend with unspeakable pathos.

Sirena hesitated a second in doubt. Then in a voice half broken by irrepressible sobs, she went on once more till she came to the words, 'the Arabs at Ouargla,' 'died without pain.'

Psyche drew a deep breath again, and sighed once.

Strange to say, she seemed more composed now at the last moment than either of the others. Surely the bitterness of death was past. Compared to her worst fears—her worst dreams of unspeakable Oriental torture—that 'died without pain' was almost comfort.

'I know when he died,' Psyche murmured low, after a short pause—'I had a presentiment. That day when I saw him lying dead by himself on the sands in the desert!'

Her unnatural composure terrified Dumaresq. Such deadly calm at such an awful moment could bode no good. He peered down into her eyes—those deep, clear eyes of hers, and saw they were now tearless as well as sightless.

'Cry, darling, cry!' he exclaimed in his terror, clasping her to his bosom in an access of wild despair. 'Cry Psyche, for my sake, try to cry! If you don't, your grief will surely kill you.'

'I can't, papa,' Psyche answered quietly, as pale as death, but horribly calm and immovable. 'I cried so much at Petherton—in the nights, alone, when nobody knew I was crying at all—that I taught myself how to cry internally, somehow. And now, when I'd like to let the tears come most, I feel I can't. They won't break through. My eyes are so hard—like iron balls. There's no cry left in them.'

The old man seated her gently on the rocks once more. Those great blind eyes of hers gazed blankly and despairingly over the dark, dark world that stretched in front of her. She had nothing left to live for in it all now. She sat bolt upright, immovable as stone. Her heart stood still like a stone within her. She said nothing, she saw nothing, she thought of nothing. A great numbness seemed to steal over her senses. She wasn't even unhappy in any active sense. She was conscious only in a dreary, weary, half dead-alive way of a vast calm blank spread for ever before her.

She was sinking, in fact, into utter lethargy. Long grief and despair had driven her senseless.

They sat there long, those two others, watching her anxiously. Many times Sirena looked across with a

mute inquiring look in her eyes towards Haviland Dumaresq; and each time the gray old philosopher, heartbroken himself and torn with remorse, framed his lips into a mute '*No*' when Sirena would have spoken to his heartbroken daughter. It was better to let this dazed and paralyzed mood wear itself out to its natural term by pure inanition. Psyche had so discounted her grief already, that the final announcement came, not as a sudden shock, but merely as a clear and fatal certainty, where before there had been nothing but doubt and hesitation.

At last, with a sudden return of power, she rose from her seat on the great rock, and moved towards the house, neither seeing nor yet groping, but finding her way, as it seemed, by pure instinct. Her tread was firm and her voice steady.

'Say nothing of all this at the villa, Sirena,' she said calmly, turning round as she reached the road. 'I can bear it all now. I feel stronger already. He died without pain, Sir Austen says. And it's something, at least, to know exactly what happened to him.'

Sirena walked on by her side and wondered. But, in truth, Psyche had no reason to weep. A strange yet natural strength seemed to buoy her up. It was the strength of despair, backed up and reinforced by the strength of duty. Her own life was cut off from her altogether now. She had nothing left to live for henceforth but her father. When *he* was gone she might fade away as she would, like a withered flower.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE MEETING.

For the next three days the same unnatural peace of soul possessed Psyche. Sirena and Geraldine Maitland, who were constantly in attendance, could hardly understand her strange, unvarying calmness. But Haviland Dumaresq, nearer to her in blood, and liker in fibre, understood it only too well. Psychologist that he was, he knew what it meant—a self annihilated.

When a soul is dead, it doesn't complain; it doesn't grieve; it doesn't even despair. It lives on with a vague sort of vegetative life—a life which stands to the psychical health in the same relation as the state of coma stands to the bodily functions. That was indeed the sort of life that Psyche was now fast falling into.

On the third morning after the final collapse, Sirena received a telegram from her sister, dated from Constantine:

'Sir Austen better, and able to travel. We are all coming on together at once. We shall reach Algiers by to-night's train. Come in with a carriage from the Orangers to the depot, to meet us.'

She showed the telegram, in much doubt, to Dumaresq. How to comport themselves? The old man turned it over in his mind for a moment.

'Shall we let her know they're coming, or not?' he asked, hesitating. 'Either way, Sirena, seems fraught with alternative danger.'

'Let her know,' Sirena answered, with American boldness and feminine instinct. 'Say to her "Corona and Cyrus are coming." She'll be anxious to know whatever they can tell her. You needn't mention that Sir Austen's with them.'

'But suppose she should want to go down and meet them?' Haviland Dumaresq suggested.

The events of the last twelve months had so thoroughly unmanned him, that that proud spirit condescended even, for the first time in life, to ask somebody else's advice about his own movements.

'Let her go,' Sirena answered, after a second's consideration. 'It'll do her good, Mr. Dumaresq, even to move. Anything that sort of takes her out of herself is good for her, I opinionate. She'll want to hear what Sir Austen has to say. And if she sees him, it'll satisfy her to learn the worst at once. After all, Sir Austen was the last man to see him.'

'I can't bear to tell her!' Haviland Dumaresq cried, recoiling. 'Will you, Sirena?'

With a nod, Sirena slipped from the room to Psyche.

She told her the message very gently. Psyche, sitting by the open window, where the sun shone warm on her face, and the insects hummed, and the scent of the great white Japanese lilies floated in upon the breeze, listened with that strange dull calmness still all unbroken.

'We'll go to meet them,' she said simply, folding her hands on her lap in Quaker fashion. 'I can bear all now. I can bear anything. Do you know, Sirena, I felt almost happy in the warm, bright sunlight just this minute—happy like a lizard—before you came into the room to tell me. The light fell upon me till I felt it with my face; and it seemed as if the world were all dead to me at once, and my eyes were gone, and my senses were failing; and just the sunlight and the breeze and the flowers remained, and the noise of insects, and the vague sense that, after all, he wasn't now so very, very far from me. He was farther away, you know, before we knew all. And now, I think, he knows all too —and perhaps he forgives me.'

'You must rouse yourself!' Sirena cried, with a face all tears. 'Oh, Psyche, you must really try to rouse yourself! You mustn't let your life just dream itself away and fade out like that. For your father's sake, dear Psyche, you must try to rouse yourself.'

'I can't,' Psyche answered, moving her sightless eyes quietly round in the broad sunshine. 'I don't seem to have impulse enough left now for anything but this. I like to feel the sun fall full upon my eyes. I can feel it hot—oh, so hot!—on my eyeballs. I'm quite resigned—quite resigned now, Sirena; and I feel somehow that if I were to try and rouse myself, the pang in my heart would come back at once as fierce and cruel and painful as ever. It would come like a spasm, and cut through and through me.'

'But you'll go down to meet Cyrus?' Sirena cried, with a despairing look.

'Oh yes, I'll go down to meet Corona and your brother,' Psyche answered, with a quiet, half-inaudible sigh. 'I couldn't bear not to go down and meet them. I want to hear the worst at once, Sirena. I think when I've heard it, dear, it'll be all over. And, besides, I want

to thank them both so much for the trouble they've taken.'

And she kissed her new friend's hand softly and tenderly.

At six o'clock that night they were at Algiers station, Haviland Dumaresq and Sirena supporting and guiding the blind girl's steps, and Psyche, pale but resolute still, walking firm with unfailing feet between them. After all, she was still Dumaresq's daughter. Though eyes and nerves might desert her at a pinch, that unconquerable will should never fail to sustain her.

At ten minutes past six the train steamed, snorting, into the bare station. As it came, Psyche's heart sank slowly within her. She knew not why, but a faint fluttering possessed her soul. She remembered that fluttering well of yore: how strange! how unexpected! She had felt it more than once—in her happy time—in the old, old days—that summer at Petherton.

She hardly knew herself what the fluttering foreboded.

The train pulled up at the platform in front. Haviland Dumaresq, too agitated in soul to know what he was doing, left Psyche for the moment in Sirena's care, and rushed forward along the line in search of Cyrus and Corona. Sirena drew Psyche gently along, and stopped at last in front of a full carriage, whence two or three people were descending deliberately, with true African laziness, among their rugs and bundles. Corona's grave face gazed out at her ruthfully in the background behind, and Cyrus stood beside her, looking very solemn.

'Take care, Sir Austen,' Corona whispered under her breath. 'Perhaps you'd better not get out just yet. My sister's there, and I—I fancy she's got a friend of hers with her. She's very much agitated. I don't want you to get out too soon and shock her.'

'Shock her!' Sir Austen answered, in genuine surprise. 'Why, what do you mean, Miss Vanrenen? I'm wasted, I know; but I don't quite understand what there is about my appearance——'

But Cyrus would permit him to say no more.

'Not just now,' he interposed, in an authoritative voice. 'We'll explain by-and-by. Let my sister get out

first, and then I'll come myself. Good-evening, Sirena. Good-evening, Miss Dumaresq.'

At that name Sir Austen gave a sudden start of astonishment.

'Miss Dumaresq!' he repeated, with extreme incredulity. 'Not—not Miss Dumaresq, Haviland Dumaresq's daughter?'

As he spoke, in a voice loud enough to be heard outside the carriage, Sirena started back with alarm to see Psyche's face, pale as death before, grow suddenly crimson, while a terrible thrill passed visibly like a wave through her whole body. Corona was pausing on the step now, and Cyrus, with one hand outstretched in a warning attitude above his shoulder, was endeavouring to prevent Sir Austen from descending. But Sir Austen, undeterred by his vain remonstrance, burst wildly to the door with incredible strength for a man just recovered from the fierce throes of fever, and crying aloud in his paroxysm, 'It's she! It's Psyche!' rushed frantically out upon the open platform.

Next moment, to Sirena and Corona's unspeakable astonishment, Psyche herself, rushing forward with equal ardour to meet him, lay fainting and sobbing in Sir Austen's arms, in one fierce torrent of outpouring emotion.

For a full minute she lay there still, panting hard for breath, and now once more deadly pale in the face, with the awful pallor of a broken heart too suddenly relieved from an unbearable pressure. Sirena and Corona, taking it all dimly in, but not even now understanding to the full what it really meant, stood reverently by, endeavouring to shade them with their screening bodies from the prying eyes of the other passengers, and too agitated themselves to make any effort at calming the agitation of those two weak and overwrought lovers.

At last Haviland Dumaresq, having walked in vain to the train's end without recognising anybody, turned back in his quest, and came suddenly face to face with the unconscious couple.

Corona noticed, even in that moment of hurry, excitement, and surprise, that as soon as his eyes fell upon Sir Austen, a strange gleam of joy, not unmixed with an

expression of incredulous astonishment, lighted up the old philosopher's cold and clear-cut features. He advanced, all trembling, with outstretched hand.

'Why, Linnell!' he cried, in a voice half choked with its own delight. 'You back! You safe! They said you were dead! This is wonderful, wonderful! They told us it was the other one!'

'What! it isn't Sir Austen after all, then!' Cyrus cried, half piqued to think he hadn't really been hob-nobbing these last three days with a genuine unadulterated English baronet.

'No, no,' Dumaresq answered, still grasping the painter's hand hard in his trembling fingers. 'It isn't Sir Austen at all, thank God; it's his cousin, his cousin!'

Linnell turned round, with poor Psyche half fainting still, and supported on his arm.

'Yes,' he said quietly, with a deep sigh of regret. 'It *is* Sir Austen—I'm Sir Austen now: my cousin lies dead in the desert behind me.'

Corona and Sirena stood off, all aghast. Then Cyrus's chance was gone for ever; and Psyche would yet be a real My Lady!

After all, it would be something to talk about in Cincinnati: 'Our friend Lady Linnell, who was once Miss Dumaresq.' And only to think they'd be able to call a real My Lady by her given name, Psyche!

For if there is any being alive on this oblate spheroid of ours who thoroughly appreciates at its fullest value the social importance of rank and title and 'our old nobility,' that being's home is by the setting sun, and his land is surely the great Western Republic.

But Psyche only knew that *He* had come back again.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE FAITH CURE.

For a minute or two they crowded in silent awe and suspense round poor fainting Psyche, whom excess of joy, too sudden joy, had affected so profoundly as no shock of grief could ever have affected that resolute nature. Then

Haviland Dumaresq, half seizing her in his arms, led her gently aside; and the *chef de gare*, perceiving her weak and shattered condition, brought out a chair and placed it for her by the wall with something more than mere conventional French politeness.

'Mademoiselle is moved?' he asked good-humouredly. 'Mademoiselle recovers a long-lost friend? A brother, perhaps? A parent? An acquaintance? May I venture to recommend for mademoiselle some *eau de fleurs d'oranger* in a little water? That calms the nerves; that restores the circulation.'

He brought her that universal panacea of his race in a full tumbler, and Dumaresq, trembling, held it to Psyche's lips. But Psyche waved the sickly decoction away with her hand rapidly, and sat still, fanning herself in a whirl of joy. Her whole soul was divided within her by conflicting emotions. She hardly knew as yet whether she could survive the shock, the terrible shock, of finding her painter alive again and restored to her so unexpectedly.

One thing only she did *not* feel—the faintest shame or maidenly shrinking at the way she had flung herself without one thought of reserve into Linnell's arms as he stepped out on the platform. She couldn't tell how, but no doubt or fear remained any longer: she *knew* now, knew to an absolute certainty, that she loved Linnell, and that Linnell loved her. After all they had both done and suffered, the idea of greeting him in any other fashion than that never even occurred to her. Nor, to say the truth, did it occur to Linnell either. For both, in the delight of that unexpected meeting, the past was blotted out at one single blow, and they stood face to face at last rejoicing, too full of joy to admit the intervention of any other smaller or less worthy feeling.

That practical Corona was the first to make a decisive move.

'Say, Cyrus,' she exclaimed, turning round abruptly, 'you've got the checks. I gave 'em to you at Constantine. Just you run and look after my baggage, will you?'

Thus admonished as to the common concerns of our everyday existence, poor crestfallen Cyrus, feeling himself somewhat awkwardly at a discount in this pretty

little domestic drama of European life, went off as he was bid to recover the luggage. In a few minutes more he returned in triumph to the spot where the little group still sat or stood immovable, and recommended a retreat to the cabs outside with all expedition. For, to say the truth, they were beginning to attract some whispering attention.

'Can you move, dear?' Sirena asked, bending gently over Psyche with sisterly interest; 'or would you like us to ask some of the depot folk to lift the chair and carry you out to the carriage?'

Psyche rose, abashed at last, from the chair where she sat. 'I can walk,' she answered, now blushing violently, and just conscious for the first time since Linnell's arrival of that alternative aspect of the unexpected episode. 'But where is *He* going to stop this evening?'

'Sir Austen?' Corona asked. 'Oh, we've fixed up all that as we came along in the cars. He's going along up with the rest of us to the Orangers.'

'If I may, Psyche,' Linnell added wistfully.

Psyche made no answer, but looked at him through her tears. Then, taking her father's hand tremulously in hers, she walked over with the rest to the door of the station. The Arabs and the porters were already engaged in the usual pitched battle outside for the possession of the boxes. Psyche stood by and looked on, while the two conflicting powers mounted the luggage on the front with many loud cries and shouts of 'Ar-r-ri.'

'We shall want two cabs,' Corona whispered in her brother's ear. 'Let Sir Austen and the Dumaresqs go up alone together.'

Cyrus turned round and gazed with a sudden start into Psyche's face. Psyche blushed: her eyes met his all unawares for a second, and then dropped timidly. Cyrus had not presence of mind to conceal his surprise. 'Why, she sees!' he exclaimed in a tone of the profoundest and most naïf astonishment. 'Have her eyes got all right again while we were away, then, Sirena? She sees to-night just as well as anybody! She walked like an arrow straight out of the depot!'

Psyche herself started in return, almost equally aston-

ished at this new discovery. In the tumult of mingled emotion and internal feeling at that supreme crisis of her life she actually forgot for the first minute or two she had recovered her sight; or, to speak more correctly, she never so much as remembered at all she had lost it. The moment she heard Linnell's voice in the carriage, her senses were quickened to the utmost pitch of effort and efficiency. She knew it was Linnell: she was sure it was Linnell; and at that sudden revulsion, breaking forward in a wild rush of joy, she looked, without ever even thinking of it, in the direction whence that familiar voice proceeded. In a second the disused nervous tracts resumed, as if by magic, their forgotten function. Science was right: it was mere obsolescence. She saw her lover, her dead lover, in that second of joy, as distinctly as she had ever beheld anything on earth in her whole life before.

Yes, Haviland Dumaresq was justified after all. Happiness is the best of all possible tonics. As they rode up together through the crowded streets, Linnell sitting opposite her in the light fiacre, and all the world at once recovered, Psyche still forgot she had ever been blinded. Her father watched her with anxious care. Was it only a false flicker, he wondered to himself, or would her sight come back again as clear and strong and distinct as ever?

Day after day he watched her carefully. Would a relapse come? But he had no need now to watch any longer. The cause was gone, and the effect disappeared as if by magic along with it. For awhile, indeed, Psyche's eyes were a little less serviceable and trustworthy than of old: occasional short fits of dimness supervened: the long disuse and waste required to be repaired by gradual rebuilding. But joy works wonders unknown to medicine. With each fresh day spent at the Orangers under these new conditions, Psyche's health recovered itself at once with the marvellous rapidity of early youth. Algiers was glorified for her into an earthly paradise. Those beautiful walks on the breezy hills, those valley strolls among the asphodels and the

orchids and the Spanish broom, with Linnell by her side to take her little hand as she clambered among the rocks, and to whisper soft words into her tingling ear, brought unwonted roses back to that cheek, so pale and white in the beginning of the winter. The joy that might have killed her restored her to life. She revelled in the light, the warmth, the sunshine.

For her own part, Psyche had never the courage to hear from Linnell's own lips the true story of that terrible ride for life across the burning desert, and the catastrophe which had wrought them both so much untold misery. But Haviland Dumaresq and Cyrus Vanrenen heard it all the very next day, in the garden at the Orangers, while Psyche sat happy in the tennis-ground below, with Sirena's hand twined in hers gratefully. They heard how Linnell, in his last extremity, escaping from the camp with his cousin Sir Austen, had been intercepted on the open by a strong body of robber Touaregs, not far from Hassiou, the very spot where, a few years earlier, Colonel Flatters and his French expedition had all been massacred in cold blood. Sir Austen, whose camel was less fleet than Linnell's, seeing the outlaws approach, had urged his cousin to fly at all speed and leave him to his fate; but the painter, incapable of deserting his tried companion after so many dangers faced and escaped together, had turned to his aid, and in his fluent Arabic endeavoured to parley with their savage assailants. The Touaregs, however, cared but little for either Christian or Moslem. They fired upon Sir Austen, who fell from his seat; and they left him dead in the night on the open sand. Then, hacking down Linnell himself with their short swords, they went off with the camels, so that the artist found himself alone in the desert, without food or money, to die of hunger and loss of blood, or be devoured, half dead, by the clanging vultures.

Haviland Dumaresq shuddered as he heard the tale. 'Never tell Psyche,' he cried, with his hands clasped tight. 'She's suffered enough, and more than enough, already. To know how you, too, suffered would wring

her poor heart. But what did you do then? How did you finally get across to Ouargla?'

'I was left on the sands alone,' Linnell answered briefly, 'with my cousin's body lying dead before me. A horrible terror seized me lest the caravan we had just left should come up and overtake us, in which case our sheikh would of course have finished killing what little was left of me. I was faint from my wounds and loss of blood. But there was only myself to do all that need be done. With my own hands, there in the open plain, I scooped a hole in the hot, hot sand, and covered his body over with it decently. After that, I set out all alone to walk northward. The loss of blood had left me very faint: so, crawling and straggling, I hardly know how, failing at times, and dying of thirst, but enduring still—because I wanted to get back at last, for Psyche's sake—I made my way towards Algeria. After two days' floundering alone through the bare sand, dazed and stunned, and half dead with fever, I lay down to die. Just then, a caravan belonging to the Khalifa of Ouargla, who is a French dependent, came by within sight. I signalled with my handkerchief. They picked me up. I promised them money if they took me with them; and they brought me on to their own oasis, where the White Brothers, as you know, generously took charge of me and tended me carefully. But don't ask me any more at present. I can't bear to talk of it: I can't bear to think of it. The picture of that poor fellow lying bleeding and dead in the midst of the desert, with the lonely silent sand spreading wide all around, and the blazing sun hanging all day long in the hot gray sky overhead, haunts me still, and will haunt me for ever, till the day I die, with its horrible presence.'

When he finished his story, Cyrus drew a deep sigh of regret. He was glad Miss Dumaresq should have her lover back again; but he did wish events at Cincinnati had permitted him to stop and see her made into a real live baroness. For Cyrus's views on the intricacies of British nomenclature in the matter of titles were as vague as those generally current in the newspaper press of his benighted fatherland.

CHAPTER XLIV.

'ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.'

NEXT day, at the Orangers, Cyrus Vanrenen, with a little stifled sigh of regret, announced his intention of proceeding to Marseilles within forty-eight hours, *en route* for Amurrica, taking Sirena and Corona, in his own words, 'along with him' on his journey.

Psyche looked up as he spoke, with an astonished air. She liked Cyrus, and was grieved to think her happiness, as she imagined, should have brought about so sudden a determination on the young American's part. 'Why so soon, Mr. Vanrenen?' she asked in surprise. 'You surely meant to stop here the rest of the season, didn't you?'

Cyrus hesitated for a few seconds. 'Well, when a man's ruined, you see,' he said, after a short pause, 'I guess it's about pretty nearly time for him to be moving off home to look about his business. In Amurrica, Miss Dumaresq, when an operator loses one fortune on a throw—why, he begins to think seriously in his own mind about piling up another.'

'Ruined!' Psyche exclaimed in the utmost dismay. 'Lost a fortune! Oh, Mr. Vanrenen, you never told us!'

'Well, there!' Sirena put in, with a little deprecating wave of forgetfulness. 'I do declare! what a giddy girl I am! Why, Psyche, we've had such a lot to think about, last few days, if it hasn't completely slipped my memory to speak about Cyrus having dropped his fortune! He had losses in business, home, you know—very serious losses. He'll have to go back to start things afresh; and Corona and I must go, too, to help poor momma.'

Corona heaved a gentle sigh regretfully.

'It's come at a most awkward moment, too,' she said. 'It would have been real nice, now, if Sirena and I could only have been bridesmaids—wouldn't it, Reeney?'

Psyche blushed crimson. As a matter of fact, so far as she had yet been officially informed, there was nobody's wedding just then in contemplation. But Sirena, paying no attention to her obvious embarrassment, continued

placidly to debate that subject of perennial interest to women.

'So it would,' she echoed; 'and Corona and I'd have been real glad to be able to give you a proper sort of present. But that's all past now unfortunately, till Cyrus can scrape up another little pile again. Corona and I had all our own money staked, of course, on Cyrus's operations. It's just downright annoying, that's what I call it, at such a moment. I should have liked folks in Cincinnati to see in the *Observer* I'd been acting bridesmaid at a regular aristocratic British wedding.'

'Couldn't you arrange it pretty soon, Sir Austen, so as Sirena and I might stop for the ceremony?' Corona continued, looking across the table candidly at Linnell, whose awkwardness almost equalled Psyche's own. 'You'll be married here before the Consul, of course; and Sirena and I would just love to assist at it. It'd be something to talk about when we got back to Amurrica.'

'Oh, don't, dear, *please!*' Psyche whispered in an agony of shame, squeezing Corona's arm hard with an expressive pressure. 'But it isn't really so serious as all that, Mr. Vanrenen, is it? You've not had any *very* bad reverses, have you?'

'Well, not more serious than being left in the world with the cash I have in hand and the clothes I stand up in,' Cyrus answered good-humouredly. 'The trouble is, I don't see now how we're to get back at all, if we don't get back right off, as we are, before we've spent the last dollar in our pockets. Much as I should like to risk my end cent in seeing Miss Dumaresq comfortably married, Sir Austen, I kind of feel there ain't the same chance for a man like me of making another pile here in Algiers that there is home in Cincinnati. Africa don't offer the same scope for an operator's enterprise as Amurrica, anyhow.'

That same afternoon Geraldine Maitland came over to see them. It was not without regret that Cyrus led that very high-toned young lady to a secluded seat at the far end of the garden, for a last interview. Now that the moment had actually come for parting for ever, Cyrus was conscious in his own mind how great a strain that wrench would cost him.

'Miss Maitland,' he said, blurting it out like a schoolboy, 'I wanted to see you alone a bit before I went. I'm off by to-morrow's boat to Marseilles on my way to America.' He said America, and not Amurrica. Before Geraldine's face, he had schooled himself now with great difficulty to the slenderer and thinner Britannic pronunciation.

Geraldine started, and her eyes fell.

'To America,' she echoed, with obvious regret. 'Is it so serious as that, then? And we won't see you this side any more, Mr. Vanrenen?'

'Well,' Cyrus answered candidly, 'not till I've made another pile, any way. Things look bad, I don't deny. We're dead broke, my partner and I—that's where it is, Miss Maitland.' He drew a long breath. 'But I confess, though I don't so much mind the worry, I'm sorry to go just now,' he continued more earnestly. 'You see, the girls 'ud have dearly liked to stop a bit over here for Miss Dumaresq's wedding.'

Geraldine's eyes were fixed on the path, and her parasol described aimless arcs among the small gravel.

'I'm sorry too, Mr. Vanrenen,' she said at last frankly.

'You are?' Cyrus cried, brightening up at her sympathy.

'Very,' Geraldine replied, drawing a larger and completer circle than any yet, and then dividing it into four quarters with a painful display of minute accuracy.

Cyrus gazed at her with undisguised admiration.

'Why, that's real kind of you,' he said gratefully. 'You've been good to me most always, I'm sure, Miss Maitland, and you're good to me now, to the last, much more than I expected.'

'When *wasn't* I good to you?' Geraldine asked, turning round upon him half fiercely with flashing eyes. Cyrus was too afraid to look her straight in the face, or he might have seen that small beads of dew glistened with a tremulous moisture upon the lashes.

'Well, as I said before, it ain't any use crying for the moon,' he replied evasively, twirling his stick; 'but I did think once——' He broke off suddenly. 'Say, Miss

Maitland,' he went on again, after a catch in his breath on a new tack this time: 'Do you know what I'll be sorriest to leave behind, when I go to-morrow, of all the people and things I've seen in Europe—or rather in Africa?'

'Yes,' Geraldine answered, with unexpected boldness; 'I know exactly.'

'Well, it'll cost me a wrench,' Cyrus said with manful resolution.

'Why make a wrench at all?' Geraldine murmured low; and then blushed bright red at her own audacity.

Cyrus glanced back at her, half puzzled, half overjoyed. She was making the running for him now, and no mistake.

'Well, it can't be helped,' he mused on slowly. 'There's no way out of it. I've got to go. I've got to leave it, cost me what it will. I can't earn my living, don't you see, anywhere but in America.'

'I meant,' Geraldine said, uprooting a pebble with the parasol end, and egging it hard out of its nest sideways, 'why not take *it*, whatever *it* may be—along with you—to America?'

Cyrus glanced sharply round at her in almost speechless surprise.

'Well, I do admire at you, Miss Maitland!' he ejaculated, with a sudden burst of joy. 'But there must be some mistake somewhere. I haven't a cent now to keep a wife upon.'

Geraldine took his hand in hers spontaneously. Her genuine emotion excused the action.

'Mr. Vanrenen,' she said softly, 'I don't care a pin for that. I like you dearly. I always liked you. I was always fond of you. I was always proud of the way you thought of me. But I wouldn't accept you—because of your money. I didn't want anybody to have it to say—as all the world would have said—that I'd set my cap at a rich American. So, in spite of mamma, I wouldn't take you. But that day, you remember, when the telegram came from your partner in America, and you behaved so beautifully and so heroically and all that—never thinking of yourself, but only of Psyche, and forgetting your own trouble so bravely in hers, and doing your best

for Sirena and Corona—why, that day, I'm not ashamed to say it, I loved you, Cyrus. And I said to myself, "If Cyrus asks me"—for I always call you "Cyrus" in my own heart——'

The young man looked back into her face with shy delight.

'Miss Maitland——' he began.

But she checked him with a little imperious gesture.

'Geraldine, you mean,' she corrected pettishly.

'Well, then, Geraldine—if I may dare,' the young man repeated, all aglow with joy. 'I don't know how to take this honour upon me; and I don't know how to say I can't marry you. You make my heart go too hard to think. But it wants thinking out. A week or two ago I'd have given thousands to hear it. But now I haven't got thousands to give: I know I can't keep you as you're used: I can't keep you anyhow, if it comes to that. Whatever I've got is all my creditors'. But never mind! I'm the proudest and happiest man alive in all Africa this minute, if you really mean to tell me you'd let me marry you. And if you'll stick to it, Geraldine—there, I don't feel I've got any right to call you so, you're always so high-toned—I'll go back home to America right away, and I'll work like a slave, day and night, till I've heaped another pile as big as the first to come again to Europe and offer you.'

Geraldine was holding his hand convulsively now.

'No, Cyrus,' she said shortly. 'That won't do, either. I don't want that. I want to go with you.'

'You can't!' Cyrus cried in a burst of despair. 'I'd cut off my right hand to make it possible, if I could; but there's no way out. Why, Geraldine, I'm almost ashamed to say it even to you, but I shouldn't have the funds in hand to pay your passage across the water.'

Geraldine clung to him with a half-timid boldness.

'But I can't let you go,' she said, holding his hand tight. 'Cyrus, I love you. I'd never have married you then, when you were rich. I'll work my fingers to the bone for you now you're poor. I'll live on anything we two can make. I'll starve, if you like. But I can't let you go alone. I *must* go with you.'

Cyrus soothed her hand between his own caressingly, and raised it with true Western chivalry to his lips.

'You shall,' he answered, making a bold, wild shot. 'Geraldine, we'll manage it, if we have to go steerage. I never felt so proud in all my life before. I don't know where I'm standing when you tell me you love me.'

What further might have happened at that precise and critical moment, history trembles to say: had it not been that just as Cyrus dropped Geraldine's hand, and leant forward with some apparent intention of sealing his compact by more vigorous measures (which the present chronicler declines to mention), Sirena rushed up, all hot and breathless, and threw an envelope into his lap with a penitent air of sudden recollection.

'Say, Cy,' she cried, in a somewhat panting voice, 'I'm so sorry I forgot it! It's all my fault. I meant to have mailed it to meet you at Constantine: and I put it into an envelope for you just like you see it; but it came that day, you know, when Psyche was so ill, so I stuck it right there into my pocket without thinking; and from that moment to this I utterly forgot all about it. Just now on the tennis-court I pulled out my handkerchief; and there the envelope dropped out, sure enough, after lying all that time in my pocket still, for I haven't worn this dress before since the morning it came: and I'm real sorry, but I hope the telegram ain't a very important one.'

Cyrus unfolded it and glanced at its contents in profound astonishment. As he read, he whistled.

'It's from the old man, Sirena,' he murmured, amazed. 'Just look what he says! One can hardly believe it!'

Sirena took the paper and read it aloud:

'First wire premature. Jay Gould taken over affairs. The squeeze has burst. Ring operations liquidated at par. Fifth National Bank set up square on its legs again. Panic allayed. Business easy. The old house as solid and firm as ever. Hooray!

'ESELSTEIN.'

'Why, what does it all mean?' Geraldine asked feebly,

failing to take in the strange Occidentalisms of the telegram all at once.

'It means, my dear, Cy's as rich a man as ever he was a month back,' Sirena answered, delighted, grasping at the full sense with Western quickness. 'And, say, Corona,' as her sister and Psyche came up unexpectedly, 'ain't it just fine? We can stay, after all, to see Psyche married.'

Geraldine's face grew suddenly flushed.

'And so you're really rich again—Mr. Vanrenen?' she murmured.

'Well, that don't tell against me, anyhow, does it?' Cyrus asked, crestfallen, with a somewhat anxious and half-regretful look.

'Not now,' Geraldine answered, a little faintly, though not without a tinge of disappointment in her voice. 'Only—I'd rather, you know, if it *could* have been managed, it had been the other way.'

Psyche looked across at her friend with a puzzled look. But Corona took in the true state of affairs at once with prompter womanly instinct.

'I guess, Sirena,' she observed philosophically, glancing quickly from one blushing girl to the other, 'we two'll be bridesmaids at both these weddings.'

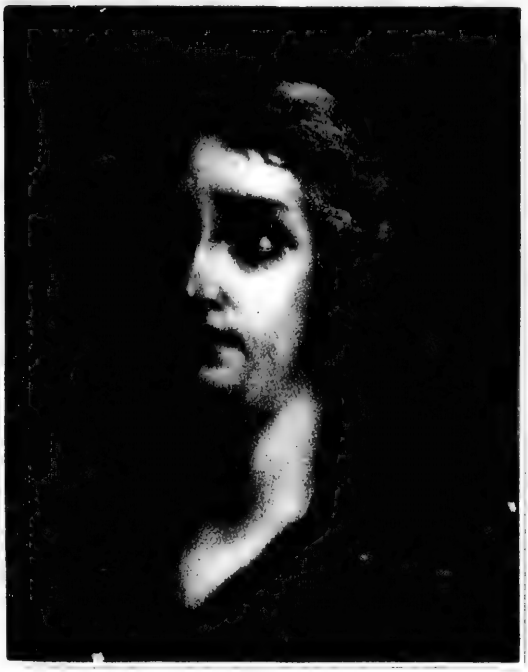
THE END.

BILLING AND SONS, PRINTERS, GUILDFORD.

The Dawn of Light between her last Moments and Eternity.

"As clouds of adversity gathered around, *Marie Antoinette* displayed a Patience and Courage in *Unparalleled Sufferings* such as few Saints and *Martyrs have equalled*. . . . . The *Pure Ore* of her nature was but hidden under the cross of worldliness, and the scorching fire of suffering revealed one of the tenderest hearts, and one of the *Bravest Natures* that history records,

(Which will haunt all who have studied that tremendous drama, THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.)"



All Hope of Succour but from Thee is Past!

. . . . "When one reflects that a century which considered itself enlightened, of the most refined civilization, *ends* with public acts of such *barbarity*, one begins to *doubt* of *Human Nature itself*, *and fear* that the *brute which is always* in *Human Nature*, *has the ascendancy!*"—GOWER.

"Power itself hath not *one-half* the Might of Gentleness."

"She who Rocks the Cradle *Rules the World*."

"Extinguish all emotions of heart and what differences will remain? I do *not* say between man *and brute*, but between *Man* and mere *inanimate Clod!*"

—CICERO.

The Unspeakable Grandeur of the Human Heart.

The Drying up of a single tear has more Honest Fame than Shedding SEAS OF GORE!!!

What is Ten Thousand Times more Horrible than Revolution or War?

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